DOCUMENTING AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY HERITAGE: ARCHIVAL STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

LILA TERESA CHURCH: Documenting African American Community Heritage: Archival Strategies and Practices In the United States

(Under the direction of Dr. Helen Tibbo)

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project explored how archivists at African American and White archives and museums document the history and culture of African American communities. While archivists have considered documentation strategies for specific industries and events, and generally build collections based on institutional missions and collecting policies, no previous investigation has examined this documentation process for specific ethnic communities. Local African American communities were the primary focus of this investigation, using personal interviews conducted via telephone. This project aimed first to identify repositories with strategies that enable archivists to adequately document local communities. Based upon these findings, the second goal was to build a documentation model that may be implemented by repositories lacking strategies for adequately documenting these communities.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Margaret Morse

To the memory of my father, William Morse

To my sisters, Gail Early and LaVern Paige and their families

To my husband, Lewis

For believing in me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the product of much hard work over the course of many days merging into nights and vice versa. I am forever grateful for the prayers, words of encouragement, and support of every kind received from friends, colleagues, and complete strangers during this intellectual journey. The names of all these persons are too numerous to mention here. However, I would be remiss not to acknowledge my deepest appreciation for the contributions archivists in North Carolina and from across the nation made to this study. I thank each of them for taking time out of their busy schedules to talk with me, participate in interviews, and recommend other archivists and repositories for my consideration. I especially thank the members of my advisory committee for their patience and support. Last, but certainly not least, I thank my husband, Lewis Church, for burning the late-night oil with me and keeping me company when it seemed all the rest of the world engaged in quiet slumber.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project examined how archivists at African American and White archives and museums document local African American communities through archival materials. The goal of the investigation was to identify strategies that have enabled archivists to achieve the most adequate and comprehensive documentation of a community's local history.

The terms "adequate" and "comprehensive" were open to interpretation, of course; what was deemed adequate or comprehensive documentation for one repository may not have been so for another. In the context of the present study, these terms referred to documentation strategies or initiatives, which, at the very least, subscribed to subject-inclusive guidelines that encompassed the breadth of a community's infrastructure, people, and historical events. Examples of such guidelines may be found in the writings of John Bonner (1980) and Richard Cox (2001). In *Preserving the Past for the Future*, Bonner (1980) states that:

> … the following areas should be covered in [writing] any local history:
> Political history
> Military history
> Social history
> Religious history
> Agricultural history
> Industrial history

Educational history
Cultural history
Professional history.[1]

On the other hand, in the archives field Richard Cox (2001) recommends a nearly identical, though somewhat more extensive, topical guideline as a "framework for documenting localities."[2] Additionally, he recommends the inclusion of "Environmental Affairs and Natural Resources; Medicine and Health Care; Populations; Recreation and Leisure; and Science and Technology,"[3] in order to "ensure some archival coverage of the full range of human activity within a geographic area."[4]

Local/regional African American communities were the primary focus of the investigation. This project aimed to assess to what extent various repositories had documented the history of these communities. The project also sought to identify steps that archivists can take to document African American history and culture more effectively in the future. Documenting communities requires the participation of individuals, groups, and institutions (e.g., repositories, churches, businesses, schools, social clubs, etc.) working in partnership with one another. The efforts of such an alliance may be explained through "small group"[5] communication theory. "Small groups are composed of a number of people who work together to achieve some common purpose"[6] such as preserving the culture of a people. In light of that, Griffin (2000) writes: "culture is shared meaning, shared understanding, [and] shared sensemaking."[7]

The importance of the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project was emphasized by the fact that "[c]hanging population demographics in the United States have led to a recognition and appreciation of the nation's rich variety of ethnic customs, traditions,

arts, languages and literature."[8] Yet, the professional literature of libraries and museums provided limited information concerning how this interest is reflected through the collecting endeavors of repositories that document ethnic culture. Fewer than a dozen articles were found in leading journals discussing the efforts that archivists expend to cultivate ethnic donors, African Americans in particular. On the other hand, the professional literature reported that, "ethnic museums, archives and libraries and their collections constitute the major source of information on the cultural heritage and historical development of individual ethnic groups in the United States."[9] A number of mainstream archives and museums have also engaged in collecting ethnic materials, such as those of African Americans who comprise one of the nation's largest ethnic groups. The present dearth of information pertaining to the work archivists do in these collecting endeavors made this investigation worthwhile. More importantly, where African American culture is concerned,

> The African American past and all it has produced is now the focus of a collecting explosion. An increasing number of people and organizations want to do more than just hear about African American history, celebrate it, read about it, or argue about it. They want to own it and accumulate it.[10]

The professional literature also reported that, "over the past three and a half decades, the importance of African American history has become widely recognized."[11] Finkenbine (2004) notes "the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s stimulated the historical as well as the political consciousness of blacks and whites alike and led to an intensive effort to recover the African American past."[12] In that regard, "one of the most exciting areas of change has been the effort to retrieve the primary sources of the African American past."[13]

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project is unprecedented. Whatever protocol archivists currently follow to document African American communities, some repositories undoubtedly recognize greater successes than others in doing so. This initiative was timely and significant because of its potential to probe those differences. The topic is one that deserves urgent attention in a profession where archivists must compete for primary source materials, which are often best characterized as time-sensitive and fragile by nature. Here was an opportunity to examine issues pertaining to the documentation of local African American communities. More importantly, this study has the potential to provide information that may help archivists improve their documentation strategies and minimize some of the risks that missed collecting opportunities and other related maladies pose for valuable one-of-a-kind evidentiary materials.

ENDNOTES

[1] John Bonner, "How to Write Your Own Local History," in Chepesiuk, Ron (ed.). *Preserving the Past for the Future: Local History and the Community*, ed. Ron Chepesiuk (Rock Hill, SC: Winthrop College, 1980), 12.

[2] Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 130.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Richard West and Lynn H. Turner, *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 31.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Em Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), 248.

[8] Lois Buttlar and Lubomyr R. Wynar, *Guide to Information Resources in Ethnic Museum, Library, and Archival Collections in the United States* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), ix.

[9] Lubomyr Wynar and Lois Buttlar. *Guide to Ethnic Museums, Libraries, and Archives in the United States* (Kent, OH: Program for the Study of Ethnic Publications, School of Library Science, Kent State University, 1978), ix.

[10] Elvin Montgomery, Jr., *Collecting African American History: A Celebration of America's Black Heritage Through Documents, Artifacts, and Collectibles* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2001), 9.

[11] Roy E. Finkenbine, *Sources of the African American Past: Primary Sources in American History* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), vii.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM

2.1 Rationale, Significance, Need for the Study

African American and White archives and museums collect primary sources documenting African American communities. However, the professional literature provided limited information concerning how any of these repositories carry out such initiatives, and that lent urgency to the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project. "Almost any aspect of archival appraisal and collecting is a fruitful area for research."[1] Investigating the collection of primary sources and artifacts that document ethnic communities, particularly African American communities, is of the utmost importance, however, because archivists are dealing with one-of-a-kind materials that have a precarious availability. Numerous African American materials "remain unidentified and in private hands," [2] and many are, therefore, threatened by an increased risk of damage and permanent loss.

The significance of both ethnic and mainstream archives and museums participating in the efforts to document often-overlooked and under-served African American communities cannot be overstated. Whatever materials are professionally collected and preserved,

> The primary question that the archivist and manuscript curator must always keep in mind is whether society—at least the portion he or she is responsible for—is being adequately documented (although the profession continues to debate the meaning of "adequate") through the careful selection and preservation of eye-readable, visible, audio, audiovisual, and electronic records.[3]

In *Documenting Localities*, Richard Cox (2001) emphasizes the values that drive collection and documentation, and the importance of asking "questions about the nature of the selection for preservation for such sources."[4]

> Are these sources important because other, better sources have been lost or not discovered yet? What do all the sources add up to in terms of any sort of adequacy of local documentation? Who has made the decisions for preservation of these sources, and what are the criteria for such decisions? These kinds of questions, many never really adequately answered, can plague the work of both archivists and their researchers.[5]

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project focused specifically upon the research questions in Section 2.3.

2.2 Theoretical Framework for the Study

"Community" is a critical element in this inquiry. "The term has many definitions"[6] and "the disciplines of history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, public administration, town planning, and religious studies all examine aspects of community."[7] In the context of establishing a framework for this study, the concept of community was examined in the literatures of sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, and religion. First, however, the general concept of community was considered as it has evolved over time.

Arising from the "Aristotelian"[8] school of thought, the traditional theory of community was political, paternalistic, and exclusive in nature. Later, shifts from the paradigm of city-state control introduced the notion of "civil associations, and communities were recognized as spheres of individual freedoms."[9] Modern theorists, "communitarians,

tend to acknowledge the primacy of human association as a source of self-identity, and therefore as a fundamental building block of human societies."[10] With yet another shift to more radical thought, the theory of community "challenges the popular view that community is only linked to the notion of the geographical locality."[11] The latter view depicts the fluid nature of communities and their various overlapping boundaries. "This moves us beyond the narrow definition of the singular community and attempts to reconcile the existence of a plurality of communities with more traditional ideas regarding the importance of membership, commonality and solidarity."[12]

The literatures consulted reveal that communities are highly complicated structures. Scholars of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and religion agree that a community in its simplest terms is comprised of the whole and its parts. The greater community is comprised of various inter-connected communities. It is implied that scholars in their respective fields use one or the other of these views (whole or part) as a theoretical framework to study/document communities.

In the field of anthropology, there is the view that such "communities seem to be basic units of organization and transmission within a society and its culture."[13] "Communities are indeed the core and essence of humanity, around which everything else is woven or spun."[14]

Psychological literature recognizes two types of communities: "locational and relational."[15] The former, "based in a specific area reflects the older model"[16] whereby "the ideal was the village with kinship links, or the small town in which people may have lived for generations."[17] The latter "ones are those that have been formed because of some common interest, issue, or characteristic that the members share, showing a newer idea of

community."[18] The literatures of psychology and sociology are virtually identical in their descriptions of these two models of community.

The literature of community history tends to focus upon the various units comprising the community, rather than the community as a whole. "*Community* history, it could be claimed, has begun to focus more sharply on a particular group of concepts,"[19] such as:

1. those related to the study of *relationships* between individuals and households *within* communities; [and]
2. those used in the study of *relationships between* communities.[20]

An entity that lends clarity to these concepts is the family. Dennis Mills (1994) writes, "the history of the family is basic to the history of community both in terms of practicality and of concepts, since a community can readily be treated as a collection of families.[21]

The significance of family is further emphasized in the field of religion. In matters such as "social welfare support,"[22] for example,

> [f]amilies were responsible for their own. When families were unable, local communities absorbed the responsibility. Thus recognizing oneself as a member of a community, whether defined by geographic location or by other shared identifying characteristics such as being Christian or being Polish, was key to developing feelings of responsibility for others and for making them part of a particular community. Along the same lines, the inability to claim membership in a particular community often left individuals with no source of social support.[23]

In addition to the respective discipline-specific approaches, ethnicity adds another dimension to the consideration of community. "An ethnic group is a self-perceived inclusion of those who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact."[24] A group's ethnic identity may be forged through "traditions such as religious

beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, and common ancestry or place of origin."[25] In an ethnically and culturally diverse nation such as the United States, ethnicity stratifies the concept of community and offers up any number of possible communities and their related aspects for investigation. At the same time, ethnicity serves to particularize a study such as the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project.

Where African Americans are concerned, "in the United States they meet sociological criteria to be classified as a 'community'."[26]

> The African American community is distinctive partly because it is maintained as a social unit by power structures that are external to it, and its culture frequently is termed a 'subculture' because it is evaluated in relation to a more dominant Eurocentric main culture.[27]

The above description suggests at least two possible approaches to documenting the local African American community from an archival perspective: the African American perspective and the mainstream community perspective. Both approaches are currently utilized, though the latter often makes for a particularly sensitive issue that is politically charged and the source of much debate. Many African Americans view the preservation of their history as the responsibility of the African American community. Members of this community feel justified in questioning the motives of mainstream repositories and the quality of some collections procured. On the other hand, archivists at mainstream repositories sometimes walk a fine line. They, too, should question their sensitivities toward issues of ethnicity and their responsibility for building collections that accurately represent local African American culture.

The scope of the African American community experience is vast; neither African American, nor mainstream repositories can independently document all of its various facets. In his book *Documenting Localities*, Richard Cox (1996) describes two relevant "models"[28] for documenting "locality,"[29] which he interchangeably references as a community. The first model Cox identifies as "the traditional approach"[30] and the second he identifies as "the practical approach."[31] With the first, he notes that:

> To a certain extent archivists and manuscript curators have developed a concept of community or locality… but acquisitiveness and a general lack of appraisal standards have overridden the potential of building conceptual frameworks for conducting appraisal and documenting localities.[32]

This approach is characterized as one where "the 'collecting' emphasis has been the primary source for thinking about and conducting archival appraisal in the United States."[33] A strong sense of urgency has driven archivists to focus their attention upon saving "fragile"[34] sources and "collect materials they perceive to be in imminent danger, sometimes irregardless [*sic*] of their perceived potential value."[35] Documentation initiatives carried out with this model tend to be "fragmentary"[36] and frequently lead to "documentary gaps"[37] whereby many collectible sources are excluded or missed altogether. The ineffectiveness of this model is due to "the general lack of [cooperation]"[38] among archives involved in the selection of local materials. Some repositories become engaged in competition for collectible materials and often lack awareness of the "identity of significant resources"[39] that exist within localities. Although repositories use this model to document localities, they are probably not doing so to the best of their organizational abilities. Such entities would be far better served to approach their collecting efforts through the practical model.

As Cox (1996) advocates, the practical model is one that provides for first making a thorough assessment of a community's history, thus,

> …ensuring that the essential aspects of a community's past and present—such as significant topics, events, and trends and movements—are adequately represented by records selected for preservation and that these records are accessible to researchers.[40]

This model encompasses a "documentation strategy,"[41] whereby "the prospects of achieving an adequately documented locality are dependent on the cooperation of a variety of institutions and individuals."[42] The "practical approach"[43] "requires either an institution or an individual taking the initiative to bring together other institutions and individuals interested in the documentation work." [44] Such an undertaking should include the following "groups or individuals"[45]:

- Staff of a historical records repository, such as a historical society, public library, museum, or local government archives.
- Local historians.
- Other users of local historical and archival records, such as academically based historians, social scientists, political scientists, and so forth.
- Representatives of regional studies centers located at universities and colleges.
- Representatives of groups concerned about the collection, preservation, and use of historical records, such as historic preservation groups and educational institutions.
- Creators of important records, such as business and corporate figures.[46]

A documentation strategy is an "alternative approach to documenting localities,"[47] and to some degree its scope may at first appear to far exceed the needs and objectives of a single isolated repository. However, this strategy "is not intended to replace methods of archival appraisal, but is meant to supplement these methods." [48] What Cox (1996) describes is a collaborative process:

> A process that emphasizes multi-institutional cooperating rather than relying upon individual archival programs, the establishing of institutional archival programs rather than solely depending upon collecting by historical manuscripts programs, and setting specific objectives for acquiring documentation rather than merely trusting achieving an adequate documentation by analyzing existing records, often fragmentary in nature.[49]

This approach is applicable to, and offers obvious benefits for, an individual repository concerned with documenting certain aspects of the African American community, for example. In particular situations where other repositories are also engaged in the same endeavor, the use of this approach can help archivists avoid duplication of collecting efforts and eliminate competition for the same materials. The result could well be that a number of repositories with different collecting foci would document a much wider and deeper vision of the African American community (i.e., religion, politics, art, business, etc.).

The practical approach described by Cox (1996) provides an appropriate theoretical framework to support the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project. His research was concerned with documenting an entity of national value comprising numerous local communities. From this viewpoint, adequate documentation of local African American communities is an undertaking that necessarily requires the participation of multiple repositories.

Nearly twenty years ago, Bettye Collier-Thomas wrote:

> All areas of black life and history need to be documented. Some areas, or rather topics, have received more treatment than others, but by and large, black history is still virgin territory. For the reality is that a substantial proportion of the records of black life and culture remain unidentified and in private hands. In recent years, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on documenting the people's history, an effort to focus attention less on the achievements and contributions of notables and to concentrate more on the masses, ordinary persons whose lives were undistinguished. In the field of African American history we must do both.[50]

Based upon such observations, the investigator of the current project conjectured that some local African American communities have not been adequately documented. There is no evidence to suggest that African American and White repositories have worked cooperatively towards achieving this goal since Collier-Thomas wrote those words. This study found, however, that a number of individual facilities have successfully documented certain aspects of local community history.

2.3 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The purpose of the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project was to determine how archivists document local African American communities. Specifically, this effort aimed to explore how African American and White repositories might better document these communities through a wide examination of current practices. The investigation sought answers to the following questions:

(1) What approaches do African American and White repositories use to document local African American communities? Which approaches are used most often for collecting materials?

(2) How do African American and White repositories document local African American communities similarly? What are the differences among the ways these repositories document local African American communities?

(3) What factors influence how African American and non-African American archivists document local African American communities?

(4) What materials are needed to document local African American communities?

(5) What aspects of the history and culture of local African American communities are repositories documenting most extensively?

(6) What model would ensure an adequate collection for documenting local African American communities?

(7) How do the efforts of African American and White repositories affect the documentation of African American communities at the local level?

2.4 Limitations of the Study

A major thrust of this project was to identify and investigate the documentation efforts of repositories with a well-known reputation for documenting African American communities, local communities in particular. Soliciting the participation of archivists at these facilities was not, however, without the anticipation of some limitations. A number of archivists failed to acknowledge the invitation to participate in the research, and several declined through email responses. Among other reasons, an unwillingness to participate may

have arisen because some "parties or stakeholders [were] likely to be concerned with what [would be] reported and how it [would be] reported."[51] Colin Robson (2002) further noted that:

> [p]articipants in the research may well be concerned with how they [and their respective institutions] appear in the report, and whether their interests, individually or collectively, are affected by publication.[52]

Archivists invited to participate were informed that the study aimed to compare and contrast the documentation efforts carried out by African American and White archival facilities. It must also be noted that the study was based at a majority-White academic institution and focused upon a racially sensitive topical area. Concerns over these factors may have influenced some archivists' decisions to participate.

The interview component utilized for the project also may have influenced some archivists' willingness to participate, because "[i]nterviewing is time-consuming."[53] The professional literature cautions that:

> … anything going much over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy interviewees, and could have the effect of reducing the number of persons willing to participate, which may in turn lead to biases in the sample … achieved.[54]

The interview protocol was designed for completion in less than one hour. Some prospective participants might have perceived the allotted time of 45 to 50 minutes as prohibitive, nonetheless.

Regarding the informants' honesty in responding to interview questions, issues such as the professional background, gender, and ethnicity of the researcher imposed limitations and bias as well. Several informants knew the researcher's African American identity and

professional background prior to the study. This information was revealed indirectly to other informants, or at their request, throughout the interviews. Meanwhile, the ethnicity of most informants became apparent to the researcher either during the course of identifying prospective participants or during the interviews. Some informants voluntarily and explicitly provided such information, while others did so more subtly. A number of informants seemed willing to reveal their ethnic identity, perhaps, in an attempt to ascertain similar information from the researcher. It was observed that learning the ethnicity and professional background of the researcher aided in establishing a level of trust between the informants and the researcher. This trust was reflected in the degree of detail that some informants subsequently provided through their responses. Such was exemplified through the conversation with an African American female informant in particular. Neither the researcher, nor this informant knew the ethnicity of the other, until the interview was nearly completed. Consequently, the informant provided considerably more detailed responses and expressed a willingness to provide additional assistance as deemed necessary. Some White informants, by contrast, seemed cautious in their responses; several were apologetic for the former racist practices of their respective facilities, which had neglected or purposely excluded local African Americana.

There were limitations related to the researcher's gender, based upon interactions with male and female informants. The majority of female informants consistently displayed a level of gentleness and nurturing toward the researcher, similar to the approach they described for use in cultivating donors. This by no means suggests that male informants were less compassionate towards the researcher or donor communities. Rather, the seemingly more direct nature of their responses was interpreted with respect to the characteristics

traditionally associated with males in society. Undoubtedly, both male and female informants would have responded and interacted differently with a male researcher conducting this study. There was the expectation that the informants would have interacted and responded differently if the researcher had conducted the interviews face-to-face, rather than via telephone.

One other limitation of this study concerned the fact that the investigator could not necessarily generalize from this study to other institutions due to the selective sampling technique employed. Appropriate measures to overcome the limitations identified in this section are addressed in the Research Procedures section, along with a discussion of issues such as participants' rights, data collecting, ethical reporting of the research, and the anonymity and confidentiality given to participants.

2.5 Definition of Terms

African American:

"A Black American of African ancestry;"[55] the ethnic identity of archival materials pertaining to the history of such groups and individuals.

Archivist:

An individual responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to records of enduring value, according to the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context.[56]

Community:

"A community of records…imagined as the aggregate of records in all forms generated by multiple layers of actions and interactions between and among the people and institutions within a community."[57] (See Cox, Richard J. *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators*. Lanham, Md., & London: The Society of American Archivists, 1996.) "… We conceive the subject to be simply the people of any particular locale, the pattern of their associations among themselves and with others beyond the locale, and over time, the changes in that pattern."[58] Cox (1996) uses the terms community and locality interchangeably and identifies the following as "defining elements of locality"[59]: "community, economics, historical development, perceptions, population, social aspects, culture, geography, landscape, politics, religion, and technology."[60]

Document/documentation:

"… The accession, appraisal, preservation, housing, and maintenance of a community's written records…."[61] Collecting primary source materials, as well the recording of oral histories from a community.

Ethnic:

"… pertaining to or having common racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics, esp. designating a racial or other group within a larger system; hence (*U.S. colloq.*), foreign, exotic."[62] The identification of African American archival facilities and cultural institutions.

International:

Designation of a collecting focus that provides for the inclusion of materials from nations other than the United States.

Local:

Designation of a collecting focus that provides for the inclusion of archival materials from the locale where an archival repository is physically situated, as well as other surrounding localities in a particular state.

Mainstream:

Predominantly white; the dominant culture in the United States; the primary identification of archival facilities and other cultural institutions that are not African American or ethnocentric.

National:

A collecting focus that provides for the inclusion of archival materials from all of the states within the United States, as well as the District of Columbia.

Regional:

A collecting focus that provides for the inclusion of archival materials from multiple states within a particular geographical area of the United States.

State:

Designation of a collecting focus that provides for the inclusion of archival materials from a single state within the United States.

Strategies:

Plans or methods used by archivists to cultivate donors and acquire archival materials for inclusion among the holdings of repositories.

2.6 Summary

The study and documentation of community holds interdisciplinary appeal for scholars. Apparently, few have investigated the documentation of African American communities from an archives perspective, however, for the canon of professional literature is lacking in that regard. This project sought to investigate archival documentation efforts at a variety of repositories, in order to assess which models adequately document local African American communities. The study compared and contrasted documentation strategies used by African American and White facilities. In addition, this initiative explored questions pertaining to the following: factors that influence whether African American or White archivists are more successful in documenting local African American communities; aspects of local African American history and culture that repositories are documenting most extensively; and ways to better document local African American communities.

ENDNOTES

[1] Richard J. Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives By Rethinking Appraisal*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004, p. 123.

[2] Bettye Collier-Thomas, "Present Programs and Future Needs," in *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History*, Sinnette, Elinor Des Verney, W. Paul Coates, and Thomas C. Battle (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1990), 160.

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[5] Ibid, 26-27.

[6] Kathleen de La Peña McCook, *A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), 5-8. See, also Robert Mills French, "Perspectives on Community Study," in *The Community; A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Robert Mills French (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock, 1969), 3-6.

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[10] Ibid, 19.

[11] Ibid, 22.

[12] Ibid, 80.

[13] Conrad M. Arensberg, "The Community as Object and as Sample," in *The Community: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. French, Robert Mills (Itasca, IL: E. E. Peacock, 1969), p. 10.

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[22] Laura Tuennerman-Kaplan. *Helping Others, Helping Ourselves: Power, Giving, and Community Identity in Cleveland Ohio, 1880-1930*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2002, p. 37.

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[24] George A. De Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation: The Role of Ethnicity in Social History," in *Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation*, eds. Lola Romanucci-Ross and George A. De Vos (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1995), 18.

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[26] William T. Osborne, "Community and Culture," in *The African American Encyclopedia*, ed. Michael W. Williams (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1993), 360.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Cox, *Documenting Localities*, 35-146.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid, 35-60.

[31] Ibid, 111-146.

[32] Ibid, 44.

[33] Bid, 37.

[34] Ibid, 40.

[35] Ibid, 39-40.

[36] Ibid, 40.

[37] Ibid, 47.

[38] Ibid, 48.

[39] Ibid, 44-45. See also, Robert J. Bailey, "Grassroots History: Collecting and Preserving," *Journal of Mississippi History*, 40 (1978): 205.

[40] Ibid, 112.

[41] Ibid, 89-94.

[42] Ibid, 112-113.

[43] Ibid, 111-146.

[44] Ibid, 113.

[45] Ibid, 114.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Cox, *Documenting Localities*, 111.

[48] Ibid, 96.

[49] Ibid, 111.

[50] Collier-Thomas, "Present Programs and Future Needs," 160.

[51] Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 501.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid, 273.

[54] Ibid.

[55] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,* 4th ed. Copyright 2003 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. Available at: <http://www.answers.com/african+american&r=67> (28 April 2006).

[56] Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. Available at: <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=293> (27 March 2008).

[57] Jeanette Allis Bastian, *Owning Memory: How A Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its Memory* (Westport, Conn., Libraries Unlimited, 2003), 5.

[58] Cox (Quoting Darrett B. Rutman), *Documenting Localities*, 10.

[59] Cox, *Documenting Localities*, 10.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Bastian, *Owning Memory*, 6.

[62] "'Ethnic, ethical, ethnicity, Ethnie, ethnique': Entries from *Oxford English Dictionary* (1961) and *Supplement* (1972), and *Grand Robert* (1985)*" in *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*, ed. Werner Sollors (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 5.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Silence in the Archives: What Have We Learned About Documentation Of African American Communities?

3.1 Introduction

Among libraries, museums, archives, historical societies, and other cultural institutions where African American archival materials may be found, what, indeed, have we learned about the documentation of African American communities? Westbrooks (1999) issues a forthright reply in "African-American Documentary Resources on the World Wide Web: A Survey and Analysis."

> Currently, there is a scarcity of printed African-American documentary resources in the United States. There is also little information about archives, historical societies, museums, and repositories whose primary goal and purpose are to collect and organize these resources.[1]

Whether we forage across the "web"[2] or page through countless print sources, this observation is an accurate assessment of our efforts. "Few explanations of how to build a library or historical manuscript collection appear in professional literature,"[3] so it comes as no surprise that even less has been reported in scholarly annals about African American archival documentation. Why does any of this matter as long as some representative quantity

of African American traces find their way into our repositories? The answer is quite simple: it matters for the same reason that information about collections of published materials matters. The study of collection development enables librarians to improve upon what they do in acquiring the best possible information resources for their patrons. Primary sources are one-of-a-kind items and their availability is tenuous, however. Often there are many missed opportunities with these materials. If we fail to collect them while they may yet be found, there may not be a second chance to do so once we reconsider our decision and its attendant circumstances. Even with all that has been collected, it is unlikely that this quantity is an adequate representation of the African American population in its entirety. An untold number of valuable primary sources may go undetected due to ignorance of their existence, especially in smaller remote or unidentified enclaves. At other times archivists may deliberately pass over such materials in pursuit of larger more appealing caches in other geographical settings. There are also instances where potential donors elect to maintain personal control over traces, rather than risk possible exploitation or misrepresentation of their history and accomplishments by repositories they neither know, nor trust. Archivists should, therefore, continue to question whether they have provided the best collections for use by scholars.

Archivists have largely kept their silence on this subject. Yet, they have acquired historical and cultural materials for inclusion among the holdings of a wide array of repositories. Various artifacts, archives, and manuscripts may be found in African American and majority White repositories around the country. No doubt, there exists an abundance of information within the circles of persons whose responsibility it is to cull through communities seeking out African Americana. Competition for such caches is keen, perhaps making archivists reluctant to speak publicly about what they do, for fear of losing the inside

track to potential collections. These individuals have undoubtedly learned many valuable lessons as well as best and worst practices. They have much to tell us about documenting the African American community, but scholarly investigation has not yet engaged them to make us privy to much of what they know.

In addition to asking ourselves *what* we know, we should inquire about what we *must* know and what difference our knowing can make for the future. "Among archivists, there has long been a marked interest in the question of documenting communities, and especially lately, in working with underdocumented communities,"[4] including African Americans. *An untold wealth of irreplaceable information has already been lost, so a sense of urgency now surrounds the need to gather African American materials presently available.* This reclaiming of the past establishes a sense of identity and connectedness as present and future generations forge their own links of cultural continuity. With that in mind, we should ask ourselves what have we learned about archival documentation of the African American community? The question begs discovery, and the literatures of community outreach, collection development, and museums and cultural institutions provide some useful clues. Additional answers come through the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project, which aimed to ease an information deficiency that currently exists in the canon of archival and Library Science literature.

3.2 Historical Overview and Related Theory

> Nothing is more valuable to a community than someone who remembers its stories and keeps them alive. Not just the stories of institutions, businesses, and politics, but stories that affirm and illuminate individual lives and ways of life.[5]

Remembering is a function that keeps us connected from one generation to the next. Ultimately, this is a charge well suited to an archival facility with the resources to acquire and preserve materials that verify who we are and what we have done over the course of a lifetime. It has long been recognized that "records [are] a more objective means for preserving critical information, a means more reliable than human memory, which remains fallible."[6] There is no better place for our collective remembrances to take root than within the local community, the foundation of society. Local communities comprise regions, which in turn comprise states, and as archivists follow this hierarchy they may succeed in documenting a truly representative version of our national history.[7] The importance of this can be summed up as follows: "local history collections, organized properly, facilitate research at all levels."[8]

Characterized by quite a lengthy record of its own, the concept of local history is not a new phenomenon by any means.

> It can be dated to the sixteenth century in England… and to approximately the same period in France. In both countries, it grew out of interests in nobility, castles, coinage, parishes, armorial bearings, and lineages.[9]

Such concerns obviously did not represent the interests of commoners. Those histories originating in early 19th century America were also limited in purview and recorded chiefly to advance the ideology of a White-male dominated society. A major reversal has occurred in modern times, however. "Local history is the study of towns or communities or counties."[10] The life and work of plain folks is now very much an area of concentration for scholars. Accordingly, "the political, social, and economic history of a community and its religious and intellectual history too"[11] are open to examination.

Interest in the documentation of local communities is closely tied to the shift that has drawn the attention of archivists and historians to the contributions of "ordinary people"[12] in society. O'Toole (1990) notes this in *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts.*[13] There was an "expansion and diversification of the archival profession… in the 1950s…[and] virtually every state had an archival program of some kind."[14] A similar explosion followed among programs at "many colleges and universities."[15] These facilities extended their collecting efforts to include groups previously left out of archives. During the latter half of the past century, a significant portion of the social and political upheaval sweeping across the United States took place at the grassroots level. This period ushered to the forefront a number of small locales with new, or previously unrecognized, voices demanding to be heard in the national discourse. Some groups and their causes sparked intense investigations by scholars. Activities such as those associated with "the rise of black power, women's rights, and the American Indian movement"[16] attributed to an increased number of historical studies overall and attracted many intellectuals to the field.[17] This unfolding of national and local events influenced archivists and curators to seek out relevant documentary materials from communities close to home.

"The first great wave of interest in the development of regionally focused collections and the writing of professional local history grew from the celebration of the U.S. Centennial in 1876."[18] During the early 1930s the American Historical Association and the Public Archives Commission extolled "[l]ocal archives [as] indispensable to the reconstruction of the past."[19] This body advocated that a community's members have a responsibility to participate in the documentation of their own history.

> It is important … that local communities preserve their archives and make them available for study by historians. In no other way can they hope to have their history written with reasonable completeness and authenticity.[20]

Kammen (2003), in her book *On Doing Local History*, establishes a timeline for a more recent growth in the popularity of local histor*y*. "There is little doubt that for the past twenty-five years, [this topical area] has been on a roll."[21] The American consciousness seemed to reach a pivotal point with the "celebration [of] the bicentennial [during] 1976."[22] Personal and professional interest in exploring and writing about the past was nearly unprecedented. This era gave rise to "a dizzying number of community histories of wide-ranging quality.[23] Subjects of scholarly inquiry broadened and transcended boundaries of class and caste. Chepesiuk's (1980) writing in *Preserving the Past for the Future* examines the sense of inclusiveness reflected in the work of scholars.

> For decades historians have mainly concerned themselves with what has been called highlife material; that is, the lives of great statesmen, prominent politicians, industrialists, and civic leaders. Not until recently has research interest centered on lesser lights; men and women of local reputation, eminent, perhaps, only within the borders of a state, or a locality within a state.[24]

Many repositories have followed suit, adding to their holdings materials representing groups and individuals whose lives and contributions have produced distinguished histories for scholarly investigation.

Suhler (1970) takes the position that "every public library is responsible for collecting and maintaining a local history collection for its own community service area."[25] A venture of this kind may require considerable time and services from staff as well as allocations of other resources. Collaborations are encouraged "with other agencies in the area interested in

local history and related fields,"[26] in order to generate and maintain support for building collections. The literature of local studies shows that materials composing a local collection may vary somewhat from one repository to another, but most scholars agree that archives and manuscripts should be included in the assortment.[27] Besides the public library, local history materials may also be found at "universities and colleges, special libraries, historical societies, museums"[28] and other cultural institutions such as churches and community centers.

When we consider works such as those by Steig (1988) and Kachun (1997) we can appreciate how perceptions about the value of local African American history have changed over the years. Steig does not reference African American materials specifically but her observation is relevant to such collections. She makes the general observation that "manuscript and other historical sources contain information that is not available elsewhere."[29] It is ironic that significant quantities of African American materials do not exist in repositories *anywhere* because some are unbeknownst to archivists and curators and the informational content of other caches has not been fully considered. On the other hand, "communities with significant African American populations…"[30] are ideal places to launch documentation initiatives because these communities "… often have resources related to local black history."[31] This fact has long been known in racially diverse learned circles. Early Black collectors including the likes of Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Henry Proctor Slaughter, and Carter G. Woodson, just to mention a few, built outstanding private collections that boasted materials from local sources and places around the world. The history is incomplete, without mention of persons such as "Daniel Alexander Payne Murray, a clerk and later an assistant librarian at the Library of Congress"[32] during the late 1800s. He "built up the

collections on African Americans, collecting books, documents, published articles, manuscripts, and letters from educated African Americans."[33] Another collector of similar inclination, "Solomon Brown was hired as a clerk at the Smithsonian in 1857. He became a leading preservationist in the Black community of Washington, D.C., especially in the Anacostia section of the city where he lived."[34] This concept of community is examined further in the succeeding section, with respect to community outreach. These collectors, and some of more recent times, placed major emphasis on books, but their inclusion of documents, archives, and manuscripts laid the groundwork for much of African American archival collecting as we now know it.

Preservation of a people's history culminates from a pairing of two main concepts: documentation and community. Definitions of the former include (1) the "administration of collections maintained and promoted by [an] institution"[35]; (2) the identification, appraisal, acquisition, and preservation of archives, manuscripts, and artifacts; and (3) a physical collection of materials pertaining to the affairs of an individual or organization. The common thread between these statements of meaning is their application in a library environment. This is merely an extension of what librarians have been doing for a long time gathering and making information resources available in the most efficient manner possible.[36] In a conventional setting documentation served as "part of the bibliographic mechanism for providing access to a large body of contemporary literature."[37] Similar issues confronted "the growth of archives,"[38] compelling archivists to also seek ways to "organize a large body of documents for effective use."[39] Concerned with "improving the utility of recorded knowledge … by investigating and developing new means for the analysis, organization, and retrieval of graphic records,"[40] documentation "may be regarded as a theory"[41] unto itself.

As described above, documentation theory directs our attention to a second theory with implications for the documentation of communities. Communication theory facilitates an exchange of information between the "librarian and scholar"[42] through the development and use of various bibliographic resources such as catalog records, bibliographies, indexes, and guides published by archives, museums, and historical societies. The mentioned sources foster "the *indirect* communication of *primary* materials within and among groups of specialists."[43] More importantly, where archival and manuscript materials are concerned, their written format establishes important "graphic communication"[44] links between the past and present.

Archival theory is also important in the documentation of communities, particularly the elements concerned with the appraisal and acquisition of materials. Appraisal theory was developed at the National Archives in the early decades of the past century for use in "managing records accumulated in federal government offices."[45] The value of records is determined by "(1) the evidence they provide about the particular government body that created them and (2) the information that records hold concerning [various] individuals and corporate bodies affiliated with the government."[46] Appraisal provides an opportunity to access the value of materials generated by external sources prior to expending time and effort to bring them into a facility. The valuation process also aids in deaccessioning materials, as described by Craig (2004).[47]

"The art of collecting"[48] might well be considered the most important of all in the documentation of communities. This effort results in the unearthing of traces of the past, without which there might be no reason for archival facilities to exist, as we presently know them. Collection development theory suggests a model for the systematic amassing of such

materials. Under the umbrella of documenting a community, all of the above mentioned theories come together, enabling us to justify particular resources we seek and why, what their values are, and the uses we anticipate researchers can make of them.

Borrowings from the fields of "history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, public administration, town planning, and religious studies"[49] aid in constructing the meaning of community. The term arises from the "Aristotelian"[50] school of thought, whereby the traditional theory of community was political, paternalistic, and exclusive in nature. Later, shifts from the paradigm of city-state control introduced the notion of "civil associations, and communities were recognized as spheres of individual freedoms"[51] where community members had more influence in determining their own existence and affairs. Scholars of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and religion agree that a community in its simplest terms is composed of the whole and its parts. The greater community is comprised of various inter-connected communities. Scholars in their respective fields use one or the other of these views (whole or part) as a theoretical framework to study or document communities.

3.3 Theory and Research Literature Specific to Topic

3.3.1 Community Outreach

Two things should happen initially when setting out to document the African American community, or any other community for that matter. First, archivists must get to know the targeted community. They should concern themselves with discovering what elements define the community; how to go about gaining entry and earning trust in the community; factors that must be considered in attempting to document the history of the community; how to get members of the community (particular leaders, professionals, etc.)

involved in documenting their history and culture; how to ensure that community folks become stakeholders in documentation projects; and steps that may be utilized to help identify and procure increased numbers of collections. Second, a community's members should be afforded an opportunity to learn about the repository and what it has to offer in terms of programs and services. Information should be made available as to why a particular community is the focus of a documentation initiative, how the project will proceed from start to finish, and who from the archival facility is spearheading the effort. Prospective donors have a right to know how their papers will be cared for, what uses that will be made of them, and how their rights as donors will be protected. A community's members should receive assurances about what they stand to gain in exchange for their participation and support. All of this information is attainable through various means that institutions trust to extend outreach to their constituent communities.

Outreach and African American Communities

Numerous scholars have investigated the subject of community and what it represents. This is a multi-dimensional property that Minar and Greer (1969) view appropriately enough as "a source of confusion for it stands for many things."[52] Communities are ever evolving and regenerating in response to various trends and issues of the times. Minar and Greer (1969) and Benedict (1969) take the position that a community's reach extends beyond just "a physical concentration of individuals in one place"[53] to include "the interweaving of cultural traits."[54] The aggregation of these characteristics determines how a community goes about establishing its unique identity.

Among other factors, ethnicity influences how a community defines itself. Tusmith (1993) discusses this issue in the book *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic*

American Literatures.[55] "An ethnic group is 'a type of community, with a specific sense of solidarity and honour, and a set of shared symbols and values.'"[56] Conceptually, ethnicity denotes attributes such as "race, religion, nationality, cultural group,"[57] politics, and ideology, all of which create certain boundaries. These boundaries often overlap and archivists sometimes have to transcend a number of them in order to document some aspect of a community's history.

"Ethnically distinct,"[58] the African American community is described in numerous works, including *African Americans in Minnesota* authored by Taylor (2002) and *The Other Side of Middletown* edited by Lassiter, Goodall, Campbell, and Johnson (2004).[59] The essence of the African American community may be articulated through its geographic location, established institutions, sustainable services, and its inhabitants. Members of this community "have well-defined cultural characteristics that reflect primarily a synthesis of African and European heritages."[60] The African American community that emerged in racially segregated Muncie, Indiana at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries is but one example. Goodall and Campbell (2004) describe this community and distill the spirit of Blacks who worked as "industrial laborers"[61] in an economically booming mainstream community. These authors show how African Americans denied access to segregated institutions and facilities in the city of Muncie established their own and founded a viable community that came to exist within the dominant community. This parallel construction mirrors that of the early African American community that emerged during "antebellum slavery"[62] and continued onward with a "separate culture"[63] base that flourished.

The African American community is a highly complex entity particularized by more than "race."[64] Historically this is "a thing that exists in concert with, or in opposition to, the

…white, or majority, community."[65] This is a "community of subcommunities and sub-subcommunities,"[66] each having its own characteristics. For a variety of reasons, however, the African American community remains accessible at times through means of some personal invitation or through outreach extended by outsiders seeking entry. Access is determined largely by the relationships that people manage to create among themselves within the community as well as with people outside of its periphery. Thus, understanding a community's composition is a fundamental step towards tailoring outreach activities to suit the needs of particular projects and the communities upon which they focus.

Community outreach provides entrée to people with whom archivists must establish critical relationships during the pursuit of prospective collections. Because "libraries bear the responsibility of preserving the history and experience of the local community,"[67] they are charged with providing outreach that enables documentation to come to fruition. Stielow (1994) supports this contention in his examination of documentation projects situated at libraries in Louisiana. Outreach in the form of "proper service to the community is a factor in the successful creation of ethnic collections."[68] Additionally, as places of origin for significant numbers of preservation projects, libraries offer worthwhile outreach models for other facilities to consider.

There is a keen interest in collecting African American primary source materials, but navigating this cultural terrain is complex. Archivists are challenged in their attempts to do so as many African Americans struggle with issues such as maintaining ownership and control of their cultural heritage and telling their own history. In addition, Riquelmy (1994) identifies other outreach related obstacles that arise from within the ranks of archival institutions. Chief among the latter, are problems associated with "getting the word out to

various groups that their materials are being collected and preserved and convincing them of the importance of having a safe repository."[69] The role of effective outreach cannot be overstated, therefore, as archivists seek ways to access and preserve the cultural legacy of African Americans and other ethnic groups.

A basic definition of community outreach "is marketing the mission of the archive program to its defined community"[70] and "contributing to a greater awareness of archives and what they do."[71] This may be accomplished variously through "publications, exhibitions, media work, education and liaison with users, stakeholders, depositors and other domains, such as libraries and museums."[72] Freeman (1984) comments similarly about the definition of outreach in *A Modern Archives Reader* and provides a list that includes "tours and cycles of activities focused on a theme or a period."[73] The Internet is also useful as an outreach tool that promotes the archives and its holdings and services.

Some scholars, including those mentioned above, depict outreach primarily from the perspective of archives. Emphasis seems to be placed more upon how the function best serves the needs of collecting institutions rather than their constituent communities. When working with ethnic communities in particular, archivists must do more than promote their own institutional interests. They must go beyond merely "establishing the perception in the larger community that the institution is committed to building diverse collections."[74] Prospective donors are more likely to respond favorably to earnest outreach efforts where evidence of some tangible benefit is recognized for the community. This observation is corroborated in "The Marketing Context. Outreach: Luxury or Necessity?" where Weir (2004) asserts:

> In some communities a project based on discovering its cultural and historical roots through exploring archives can play a vital role in bringing isolated people together and building up a sense of pride in their localities…. It can play a crucial role in building a bridge between the wider community and [the archive].[75]

Bell and Gaston (2004) describe such a project at St. Petersburg College Library in Florida. They examined how outreach "established a more positive relationship with the African American community"[76] when archivists from the mentioned institution began a quest to document the history of formerly Black community colleges. These authors show how outreach efforts persuaded African American community college alumni to become involved in preserving and sharing personal items from the era of segregation, affording a wider community the opportunity to study and appreciate Black educational triumphs in Florida.

An ideal definition of outreach is one that embodies a partnership and cooperation between archivists and members of the community. Horton (2001) writes about this in "Cultivating Our Garden: Archives, Community, and Documentation."[77] He comments on important lessons learned from "a documentation strategy"[78] devised "by two state historic records advisory boards in the Midwest"[79] concerned with documenting "agriculture and rural life"[80] in that region. Well-planned projects should result in more than just an addition to a growing bulk of records. Project advisory board members took steps to ensure that their efforts resulted in the collection of materials that suited the research requirements of scholars and adequately represented the history of the targeted region. Community members are the most knowledgeable about their history; they are resource persons and their input is invaluable. Documentation can "best proceed with the close involvement of the people on the ground"[81] helping archivists to identify important institutions, events, prospective donors,

and caches of available primary source materials deserving of being collected. Outreach efforts should induce this kind of participation from community members.

Utilizing outreach efforts to develop positive relationships with prospective donors in "underdocumented communities"[82] takes on great importance for repositories setting about to diversify their holdings. Certain suspicions and issues of mistrust often surface within communities where the wealth of history and culture seems undervalued and deliberately ignored by outsiders until archivists begin to express an interest. Community members must be convinced that their history is important and worthy of preservation. This is by no means a simple undertaking, in light of the fact that for so long a time "archivists and manuscript curators have neglected to collect the records and papers of significant groups in society, namely women, minorities, the poor, and others outside mainstream American culture."[83] Such an oversight results in much more than just the exclusion of the history of a particular group—it suppresses a valuable portion of the full record of American history. A number of documentation projects have been aimed at correcting this deficiency in archival collections locally and nationally. A discussion of projects that embody outreach efforts relevant to the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project follows.

The "African American Women in Iowa Project"[84] begun a decade ago at the University of Iowa exemplifies "a successful model for [outreach activities] and targeted collection development."[85] Over a period of four years this undertaking yielded "more than 50 collections of papers and 15 oral history interviews"[86] from communities locally and statewide. An African American woman served as "assistant archivist"[87] for the project, and Mason (2002) acknowledges in "Fostering Diversity in Archival Collections" that community membership is a critical factor for a community documentation project. Metoyer

(2000) also supports this thesis in her "Editorial Issues in Conducting Research in Culturally Diverse Communities." Gaining acceptance by a community's members, or holding membership in the community matters, especially for researchers working with a "culturally diverse group."[88]

Neal (2002) also discusses the African American Women in Iowa Project in her article "Cultivating Diversity: The Donor Connection."[89] Documenting the history of a community requires in-depth knowledge about the community and its people. Seeking input from a wide array of key personalities in the community is advisable. Community members can make tremendous contributions through their service on "project advisory boards"[90]" and as advocates within their communities. Dowell (1992), for example, highlights critical roles of educators and an elected official involved with documenting Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans.[91]

The assistant archivist for the project in Iowa followed a well-devised "strategic plan"[92] with specific project objectives for the representation of African American women in the archives and special collections of the University of Iowa Library for perpetuity. She "conducted research on the history of African Americans in Iowa and cultivated strong relationships with donors."[93] The archivist "became a recognized presence in the black communities throughout the state."[94] Various social and cultural events created a forum for "publicizing the project.[95] The outreach efforts associated with a project can create lasting benefits for the archives and the community it serves. This becomes an opportunity for a facility to gain or enhance its collection strength in a particular subject area, and members of the community may become stakeholders in a project that preserves and makes accessible an

important aspect of their history. The archives and the community can also establish a foundation for possible future collecting endeavors as well.

Outreach Models Used With Non-African American Communities

Additional clues for documenting African American communities may be found by examining projects aimed at other ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans. Interesting comparisons exist between these two populations because of their experiences with "prejudice and discrimination"[96] in the United States. Also, archivists at mainstream repositories have at times placed little or no value on preserving the history of either community. Kreneck (1985 and 1979) explains the impact and significance of these factors through his discussion of two relevant collaborative efforts in Texas, one based in Houston and another in Corpus Christi. Documenting Mexican Americans involves using "many of the same techniques one uses when soliciting papers and oral history sessions with any other group."[97] Repositories have begun making amends for past exclusions of Mexican American history and have come to realize that "community outreach is absolutely vital to the success of an archival collecting policy"[98] where this population is concerned. The Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC), "a division of the Houston Public Library,"[99] launched one such initiative in 1978. Rectifying past harms done to ethnic communities does not always come about easily, however. Sometimes a major effort must be put forth to win over community members and provide proof of the institutional commitment to an undertaking. The Houston Metropolitan Research Center's

> … staff established a program of community outreach to convince [community members that the facility was] sincerely interested in preserving the materials which accurately documented their history so that this heritage

> could be understood and shared with other groups who make up the population. [100]

The benefit anticipated from a project like the one described above will help to predict its success. Members of a community need assurances that documenting their history is not intended solely as a source of enrichment for the collecting institution. As mentioned in the discussion of African American Women in Iowa Project, a commitment of participation and support from key figures in a targeted community goes a long way toward ensuring a project's success. Such was achieved through the participation of

> branch librarians of Houston Public Library within the Hispanic neighborhoods. These colleagues, often bilingual and rooted in the local area, took interest in the archival program. They carried the message to people who might otherwise have remained uninformed and on occasion accessioned valuable material for HMRC.[101]

Negative fallout stemming from Mexican Americans' past dealings with the dominant community dictated the need for "viable regional institutions to take the lead in establishing local holdings"[102] for the Houston project as well as the one in Corpus Christi. This lesson is worthy of consideration in documenting African American communities whose members are sometimes also strongly opposed to mainstream repositories soliciting and collecting their archives. Objections are particularly evident when documentation efforts result in materials becoming remote to the communities from which they originated initially. The suitability of this approach to documentation is advocated in "Presence, Perspective and Potential: A Conceptual Framework for Local Outreach."[103] Ericson (1982) looks beyond the single-repository method of "promoting outreach."[104] His proposed model encompasses several

facilities working in unison to form "a network of local archives that function as regional centers"[105] that concentrate on documenting local communities.

Directing outreach towards families also distinguishes the documentation of Mexican American communities. Kreneck's (1979) discussion of the Corpus Christi project reveals that to "engage in public outreach [to families is a means] to acquire items to preserve the local past."[106] The rationale for this approach is that it engenders a larger base of community support for a documentation project, unlike cultivating individual donors. "*La familia*, the basic social unit among Mexican Americans, has preserved the culture over the many decades of adversity."[107] Even though the size of these collections may sometimes differ significantly from the larger collections of noted individuals, here is an opportunity for members of a broader stratum to "contribute to the preservation of their community's past through donating something they have cherished for many years."[108] Meanwhile, with outreach to African Americans, emphasis is placed largely on select or noted personalities in various communities, rather than extended family groups. The model used with Mexican Americans in Corpus Christi merits consideration and may be adapted for use with documenting local African American communities.

What if, instead of focusing upon the history of a single family, the target is an entire culture?

Similar to Mexican American culture, the documentation of Native Americans constitutes another model for outreach. A great deal of sensitivity surrounds the issue of collecting and preserving the history of Native peoples in the United States. Their treatment as a group and the attendant facts of their early encounters with European Americans speak prominently, voicing sentiments closely akin to those expressed by African Americans.

"Capable of collecting and telling [their] own story,"[109] Native Americans are rightfully protective of their heritage and how their past is interpreted. Across the archival profession "Native and non-Native Americans alike agree that it is necessary to preserve the documentary history of American Indian tribes."[110] Rather than archivists at mainstream archives taking the lead in this initiative, however, Cooper (2002) favors such facilities "reaching out to smaller repositories on the reservations"[111] and offering assistance where needed. Her argument opposes tenets that result in the establishment of collections neither housed in, nor controlled by, Native American communities. First and foremost, developing Native American archives that impart full and authentic accounts of the past for the benefit of the groups whom they represent is key to extending local outreach in these communities. Fleckner's (1984) *Native American Archives*[112] describes a number of outreach activities that promote tribal interest among "potential donors of historical materials"[113] and foster longevity and support for archival facilities in American Indian communities.

Museums too have recognized the benefits derived from "the involvement of [Native American] communities in the process of their own cultural representation."[114] Some such facilities extend outreach by providing employment opportunities for Native peoples "as consultants [as well] as professional staff members."[115] Doing so fosters mutual goodwill and trust in "building an exhibition that effectively portrays Native American culture with accuracy and sensitivity."[116]

Lessons Learned From Related Documentation Projects

Important lessons about community outreach may be gleaned from projects that are not initiated by archival repositories attempting to collect evidentiary materials for inclusion among their holdings. An example is the "collaborative ethnography"[117] of the African

American community described in the earlier-referenced publication *The Other Side of Middletown*. This project addresses oversights of a prior study that focused upon the history of the community of Muncie, Indiana at the end of the 1920s. The earlier study excluded the African American perspective. More than seventy years later, a similar effort got underway to recover the missing link. "A group of Ball State University faculty and students"[118] aided by community advisors and consultants carried out this investigation. They "documented the history and contributions of the African American community to Muncie"[119] through an accounting of the "experiences, memories, and stories of project consultants."[120] Lassiter (2004) describes a methodology that gives insight into outreach efforts extended by the project team to build trust in the community. Student investigators "participated in [the] community by attending, for example, community meetings, church services, or family events; taking photographs; observing social landscapes; and, most importantly, conducting interviews."[121] The key to the success of the project was that "students designed their own statement of ethics"[122] stipulating their professional responsibilities as researchers and the rights and privileges of community consultants. In addition, community consultants were afforded numerous opportunities to read and advise on the various chapters enunciating the facts of their personal history in the final product generated through the project.

Another project undertaken by the White historian/sociologist Elizabeth Rauh Bethel (1997a, 1997b) during the latter half of the Nineteen Seventies also sheds light on the documentation of African American communities.[123] Her research is reported in *Documenting Cultural Diversity in the Resurgent American South* and *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community*. The investigator's social interactions including regular attendance at worship services at local churches and extended periods of time

devoted to research in the community facilitated her "acceptance"[124] by the residents. Documenting the history and development of "the community of Promised Land in South Carolina"[125] required the use of a variety of "archival and oral sources."[126] Much of the history of this community established by "fifty newly emancipated African American women and men in the 1870s"[127] survived through "cultural memory"[128] passed down to the descendants of the early founders. Other facts existed in a scattering of public and privately held records. The aggregation of these two categories of sources benefited Promised Land with a rendering of the community's official history, which apparently had not been previously documented through scholarly research. A mutual trust formed over time between the investigator and community residents: these men and women felt comfortable sharing

> clues to the nature of life in Promised Land in the form of their personal and family memories; and [she] returned to them facts about the creation of the community and early life there in the form of archival documents and records.[129]

The success of this project hinged upon the researcher's respect and acknowledgment of residents of the community as authorities on their history and culture. Otherwise, Bethel may never have gained access to the personal stories she so desperately needed to fill in various gaps that existed in the archival records that provided evidence of the social history and development of a Black community in rural South Carolina.

Like Bethel, the folklorist Henry Glassie (1995) also writes about extending outreach whereby researchers involve themselves in various community activities as a way to foster trust and cooperation for documentation projects. He documented the history of "Ballymenone,"[130] an Ulster community in Ireland, and his investigation is described in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*. This was an attempt to "integrate the study of 'material

culture' and 'oral literature,' folklore and folklife."[131] Glassie fulfilled his mission through many trips and periods of extended stay in Ireland. He "worked beside [community residents], sweaty on the meadows" and spent hours visiting in their homes, interviewing people who recalled their past to him.

3.3.2 Museum Archival Documentation

Besides the traditional archives, museum archives are another venue providing access to the documentation of peoples and their communities. This feature has particular appeal because ordinarily "a museum's archives is not the main focus of the institution"[132] that is best known for collecting "objects."[133] The inclusion of "special collections"[134] at these facilities is not unusual, however. Museums "have traditionally acquired collections of personal papers and archival records"[135] along with other artifacts. Such resources are of great significance because "the value of special collections materials may go far beyond documentation of the object with which they are associated,"[136] providing insights into any number of people, places, events, and eras.

Ruffins (1992) pays much attention to the contributions that museums make in the documentation of African American culture in the last chapter of *Museums and Communitie*s. She highlights their role in the preservation of Black history over a period of one hundred and seventy years. A number of influential historians and collectors have participated in efforts to preserve important books and documents. Notable are the efforts of persons such as "Daniel Alexander Payne Murray, Solomon Brown, Carter Woodson, Jesse Moorland, Arthur Spingarn, Arthur Schomburg,"[137] and Charles Blockson, just to name a few. William Henry Dorsey is credited with founding the first African American museum around 1830 in an attempt to "document the history of Philadelphia's African American

community."[138] Various social movements also figured into retelling the African American experience, and many researchers have devised their own investigatory approaches to locate, study, and publish the evidence provided through historical materials.

Black museums complement the preservation efforts of other cultural institutions and "hold by far the greatest wealth of African American material culture. Documentary and archival materials abound[139] at these facilities. Wynar and Buttlar (1978) and Buttlar and Wynar (1996) substantiate this fact in two surveys of American ethnic museum and library collections.[140] They identify nearly seventy museums and libraries where African American collections may be found throughout the United States and provide descriptive information concerning these holdings. Unlike the abundance of archival resources found at African American museums, "when you look for the literature of museum archives there is very little available in major archival or museum journals."[141] Developments in this area of the archives profession have lagged behind far into the Twentieth century. Scarce though this literature may be, it contributes to what we already know but fails to explore in-depth strategies employed by ethnic or mainstream museum archives to document African American communities.

The Emerging African American Museum Archives Tradition

The latter half of the Twentieth century bore witness to a heightened interest in museum preservation for African American communities. The "Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s"[142] led the way with much of this initiative. Kemp (1978) and Simpson (1996) bring into perspective the state of prior neglect that had existed up to that time.[143] These scholars note that racism and negative views towards African American history threaded a long root through the national psyche and enabled Whites to minimize the importance of

Blacks and their contributions. For a long time "the history and culture of the African American population had been neglected within the education system and museums."[144] The dominant culture's intentional slight described by Simpson (1996) became "a major motivating factor in the establishment of African American museums."[145] Even this development did not focus great attention on African American archival materials per se. As late as the "early 1970s only a few repositories, primarily black, were actively engaged in the collection of the records of African Americans."[146] So, what does this mean? First, as mentioned earlier, museums are more interested in collecting objects. Many institutional mission statements may not have directly provided for collecting archival materials. Second, archival collecting is highly selective and elitist. African American and mainstream archival professionals are equally culpable in these practices. Ruffin (1992) depicts, for example, how some early African American collectors set the tone for cultural preservation and at times excluded certain classes from the Black historical record.[147]

Museums and other cultural institutions are presently in a position to construct a more historically accurate archival text of the African American past rather than a socially acceptable one. It helps, too, that archivists and researchers are interested in these materials. The realization has come that "sources ignored by past generations of collectors add to our knowledge of what we are and how we came to be what we are.[148] A re-shaping of the national consciousness and increased sensitivity to cultural inclusiveness through the years altered the institutional structure of museums. New hiring practices within mainstream facilities positioned African Americans and other ethnic peoples to have a greater say in how their culture is interpreted and represented. The number of African American museums also expanded, "being an indicator of major changes in African American political and cultural

status.[149] Promulgating these new museums provided an additional platform from which archivists can "determine what is historically meaningful and culturally significant."[150] None of this can happen, however, without participation and support from communities consenting to the documentation of their past.

Museum Documentation Challenges

The manuscript acquisition/collection building process for museums subscribes to the same protocol as that implemented by libraries and other cultural institutions. Kemp (1978) discusses solicitation guidelines in *Manuscript Solicitation for Libraries, Special Collections, Museums, and Archives*. It is general in nature and does not specifically address the documentation of African American communities. In essence, however, museum archivists must extend outreach, identify potential collections, and take appropriate steps to establish "relationships with donors through letters and visits."[151] This approach is straightforward but the same kinds of obstacles that generally overshadow documentation efforts at other cultural institutions also persist for museums attempting to document African American history. Several writers articulate representative concerns with an explicitness not voiced in the literature of traditional archives.

Stewart (1990) charges museums to take seriously the matter of preserving and making evidence of the past accessible. These facilities, "in their role of providing lifelong education, can be of valuable assistance to the understanding of the Afro-American culture."[152] One of the challenges museums face, however, is the lack of respect sometimes shown towards African American culture. This disregard may create a reluctance to support cultural institutions financially or through the donation of artifacts. Members of African American communities "are accustomed to having those things they consider glorious

interpreted from a negative standpoint. Therefore, some have made a commitment to private history"[153] with virtually no access afforded to scholars.

The unwillingness to publicly share or part with collections makes more difficult the task of gathering documentary evidence. It also dispels a long-held belief that ethnic people often undervalue historical materials in their possession. To the contrary, "what we know now is that every [African American] home and every family is a private repository of information."[154] A wealth of primary sources may be available in caches of "artifacts and documents stored away in trunks, suitcases, and attics,"[155] not to mention an abundance of oral histories that remain uncollected. While storing and maintaining physical traces in individuals' homes defies sound preservation judgment, little argument can be made about the value people attach to these items. Historical materials—"handicrafts, Bibles, photographs, clothes, invitations, church bulletins, campaign materials and sports memorabilia"[156] are prized indeed by African Americans. In the interest of providing an authentic record of their lives, many have declared:

> If my past cannot be interpreted from my experience, I will retain a family history collection that is shared by only a few members of my family, and shared only at family rituals.[157]

A second challenge for museums is convincing prospective donors of the need to environmentally safeguard their history.

Kalajian (2002) also explains how "African American attitudes towards museums"[158] impact documentation efforts. He describes problems that curators face across the state of Florida, where "getting longtime black residents to donate their memorabilia is a sensitive subject."[159] The dilemma is simply this: "most historical institutions remain in white hands,

while many of the artifacts of South Florida's black history remain in family closets or photo albums."[160] Extensive donor cultivation is required before some museums can begin to think about earning the trust of African American communities. Even then, archivists 'have to show [they're] not just a bunch of white folks out to steal [African Americans'] history.'[161] 'The best collections are in private hands. People who have these things are hanging on to them.'[162]

The issues mentioned above seem to emphasize sentiments expressed mainly towards mainstream institutions. Similar concerns, no doubt, impact documentation efforts by African American museums as well, but none of this is addressed in the currently available literature. What is important is that museums are a common denominator—regardless of their ethnic orientation—in the overall documentation scheme. Most challenges they face are elements of a much larger one having to do with deciding who has the authority to speak for African Americans and to what extent. Documenting the experiences of Black peoples of African descent has wide implications in that regard, and Bastian (2003) speaks to the heart of the matter in *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its Memory*. Her work examines how inhabitants of the United States Virgin Islands (formerly under Danish control) were denied ownership of, and access to details of their "history"[163] included in colonial records. When the U. S. acquired the territory, vital documents became ensnared in an international shuffling and landed in remote locations far from their places of origin. The realization came "that without a past that can be looked at and examined, the present cannot be fully realized."[164] This resulted in a rather contentious reconstruction of the past through oral accounts with limited access to the early written records. The controversial ownership and control of materials gives impetus to other challenges that museums face

during attempts to document "communities and groups long denied full participation in defining their place in history."[165]

Along the same lines as Bastian's scholarship, Archibald (2004) recognizes in *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* the shared responsibilities that museums and communities should have in reconstructing memory. Museums must strive to engage communities as active participants in that process. "Real community building is not about how museums reach *out*; it is about how we allow the public to reach *into* our institutions."[166] It has been stated earlier that African Americans feel the need to exercise ownership over their past; they are far more likely to agree to the public preservation of their history if they have some say in the matter.

Not to be disregarded, historians should also be considered in the effort to build African American museum archives. Their perspectives as researchers are invaluable for identifying potential collections.

> All areas of black life and history need to be documented. Some areas, or rather topics, have received more treatment than others but by and large, black history is still virgin territory.[167]

There is so much more at stake here than just a single ethnic group. This history belongs to the community, the nation, and the world. Documenting the African American heritage must become a collaborative effort.

3.3.3 Collection Development

Collecting archives arises from a long-standing practice but with a history of obviously shorter duration for African American materials. In general, "as long as there have

been records to preserve, people have preserved them."[168] Some of the earliest attempts featured "clay tablets and papyrus,"[169] followed by a progression towards some of the world's more modern formats. What we know about collecting archives is based upon the collecting practices established in libraries.

America's Black culture has a vicarious collecting history. Some of the earliest evidence was initially captured during the era of slavery through sources such as plantation records. African Americans and people of other ethnic persuasions subsequently began the purposeful preservation of this cultural legacy, accumulating a wide assortment of materials. The trend marked an ongoing process to document Black history at various individual and institutional levels. As a component of the cultural record[170] that reconstructs community memories, African American archives "have significant relationships with other forms of evidence of past and present human activity, for example oral tradition, artefacts and the built environment."[171]

Several points of inquiry may facilitate our attempts to understand the documentation of the African American community. For example, what approaches do archivists take to develop these collections? What are the critical issues that affect collecting decisions? How do African American and mainstream repositories compare and contrast in their efforts to collect African Americana? Available collection development literature has implications for collecting such materials but provides few clues to the mentioned questions. In fact, the bulk of this literature mentions infrequently most matters pertaining specifically to the collection of African American archives. The African American experience constitutes a considerable portion of our national record. There is no argument about the importance of collecting this

history, but ignorance of what archivists do in this respect creates a void in archival scholarship.

Defining the Collection Development Process

In the archival profession the collection development function represents a shared interest of repositories and the entities from which they obtain collections. Many writings on the subject give priority to the needs of repositories. A more accurate assessment is that these facilities and their donor communities are interdependent. Each benefits from the cooperation and contributions of the other, without which documentation of the past would be more difficult to achieve.

The administrative function of collection development in an archival setting is more or less self-explanatory. It is concerned mainly with the acquisition and stewardship of primary source materials.[172] Kesner (1984) describes this function in *A Modern Archives Reader* and offers recommendations for implementing and maintaining archival programs. Ideally, a repository should "establish an appropriate collecting focus"[173] that specifies and assesses the types of materials and subject areas sought for inclusion. Taking steps to "publicize the program"[174] and its resources and services generates interest among researchers and prospective donors. Winning the support of donors is necessary for helping to "establish collection leads"[175] for the future. Lastly, a repository should "provide for the evaluation of [its] program"[176] from an institutional perspective.

Evans (1995) delves deeper into the evaluation aspect and explains how collection development contributes to the professional reputation of repositories. Collection development activities enable archival institutions to assess the "strengths and weaknesses of collections and determine how well their holdings serve patrons' needs."[177] The function also

provides an opportunity to "identify and improve collection deficiencies"[178] as deemed necessary throughout the life of an archival program.

Approaches to Acquisition

Carrying out the acquisition function is a major thrust of the collection development process. The "identification and selection or collection of appropriate papers or records for permanent preservation"[179] ranks high among a repository's goals. "Appraisal"[180] represents "the first challenge confronting archivists [as they attempt to] select the archival record of our society."[181] During this process archivists determine the value of materials under consideration for possible acquisition and decide which records are worthy of preservation by a collecting institution. Valuation is based upon aspects such as the "nature, informational content, and completeness of a manuscript collection and its relevance to an institution's collecting policy and goals."[182] Cox (2004) likens appraisal unto a screening process that enables archivists to make manageable the work of selecting from the huge glut of documents generated by our society. Careful selection is the order of the day because we cannot save everything,[183] and appraisal aids in selecting those materials most suited to an institution's collecting needs.

Even before attempting to assess the value of documents, institutions must first demonstrate a commitment to archival materials that represent particular cultural groups. One way to show sincerity is through the provisions of a collecting policy, which is closely related to the collecting focus discussed in the prior section. The policy should be formal in scope and content.[184] "Collection development officers need to make sure that special collections are not only represented in the policy statement but *integrated* into it."[185] Having

such a policy, in effect, acts as a measure of quality assurance for a facility's "special research strengths."[186]

Having a collecting policy sets the stage for an exploration of major issues that affect successful collection building. Phillips (1984) examines the role of such policies at length in "Developing Collecting Policies for Manuscript Collections."[187] Important as they are, however, "written policies are not as prevalent for manuscript collections as they are for library book collections."[188] A written format should take precedence for obvious reasons. Regardless of the form a policy takes, it aids in determining certain parameters of an institution's collecting universe. Information can be made available about "the types of materials [that will and will not be accepted], size and scope, and subject specialties of the collection [as well as] terms of processing, use, and maintenance of materials."[189] Merely having a policy does not guarantee excellence in the collecting process or in an institution's holdings. Stricter inter-institutional adherence can, however, result in less "[s]poradic, unplanned, competitive, and overlapping manuscript collecting [that results in] the growth of poor collections of marginal value.[190] At the start of the collection development process, it is vital to know as much as possible about what other institutions are doing in order to foster cooperation for similar collection initiatives. The problem areas are not new, but they have long plagued some collection initiatives.

Other scholars examining collecting policies include Kemp (1978), Jimerson (2003), and Johnson (2004), who recognize the necessity of community input.[191] Their works help define the relationship between outreach activities and the collection development process. The scholarly community can articulate specific needs based upon their research interests. Archivists may wish to consider input from scholars in making decisions about particular

subjects and materials for inclusion in repository holdings. Other community members in general can provide "inreach"[192] support through relationships cultivated by a repository's collection development staff. Encouraging the involvement of local folks in archival programs and services is an avenue to an excellent source of information about a community's history and can provide leads for available documentary resources. Community participation, however, does not necessarily equate culturally diverse collections, as Phillips (1984) shows. Consider, for example that:

> The historical trends of the 1960s required collecting the records of forgotten groups of people: women, blacks, the poor, and immigrants. As a result, subject repositories increased; but collecting policies are still criticized by historians and archivists for being biased in favor of the elite.[193]

The observation above applies to White and African American repositories.[194] Without careful examination of their collecting practices, it is impossible to say which group of repositories may have done the greater harm to the African American cultural record through this kind of exclusivity.

The importance of cooperation has already been highlighted, with respect to the benefits realized when institutions resist the temptation to duplicate each other's collecting interests. This is an opportunity where archivists may consider sharing leads about collections suited to the collections of neighboring facilities. Further cooperation is possible in situations where some collections may lend themselves to a "division"[195] among repositories. Splitting collections is not the norm in most instances. Couch (1992) suggests that there are times, however, when distinct parts of a collection may be more compatible with the collecting "strengths of separate institutions.[196]

Another example of cooperation may be gleaned through the examination of documentation strategies.[197] This theoretical model is an innovation of "the late 1970s and 1980s"[198] and is regarded for its "efficiency [in] identifying and selecting records."[199] Documentation strategies encompass immense planning, coordination, and communication over an extended period, in order to ensure inclusion of the most comprehensive body of records possible. Input is sought from a broad range of participants—archivists and curators, researchers, cultural institutions, prospective donors, community leaders, and other individuals concerned with documenting a particular subject area.[200] An advantage to using this approach is the possibility of determining with specificity a project's topical focus, its geographic location, the identity of key participants and informants, the nature and suitability of available historical resources, and the repository where materials may be housed after acquisition.[201] The second advantage is that documentation strategies "may be developed at levels ranging from worldwide and nationwide to statewide and communitywide."[202] This approach should logically follow a progression in the collection development process once collecting policies are implemented. Where the objective is to document a community, its members are afforded a say in how their history is portrayed, rather than leaving the decision-making to archival professionals who render their own interpretation of the past.

Developing African American Collections

African American documentary evidence represents generations of families and communities who have contributed to the making of our nation. Hard-won recognition for their history is attributed to scholarly persistence and determined collectors interested in promoting an authentic and impartial accounting of the past.[203] It is no surprise that most attention to preserving African American materials has come from African American

institutions.[204] Mainstream facilities have begun lending their support as well, and the payoff is notable for the combined efforts of both groups of repositories. "Progress in historical research in black American life is inherently linked with the quality and availability of primary source materials."[205] In one way or another African Americans have participated in virtually every important facet of life in the United States. Their history belongs to the nation and the world and every American repository committed to collecting Black history materials holds a stake in preserving and making them accessible.

Blockson (1983) examines trends relative to collecting African American resources in various Pennsylvania localities. Like most writers tackling this subject, he references influential periods and events that helped to forge the African American experience. The establishment of organizations and community institutions has led to the generation of an assortment of records, some of which became the ongoing focus of many documentation projects. The desire to counter negative stereotypes about Blacks and heighten racial pride motivated a number of such initiatives.[206] Collecting themes span a wide range, including military service, service in public offices, political agitation, religion, education, cultural endeavors, and the sundry everyday life experiences, just to mention a few. Blockson (1983 and 1998) emphasizes the contributions of key individuals and institutions involved in anchoring and preserving these threads of memory.[207] Historians, librarians, educators and laypersons have participated in this effort.

Collecting African Americana has also been inspired by the fact that "[c]hanging population demographics in the United States have led to a recognition and appreciation of the nation's rich variety of ethnic customs, traditions, arts, languages, and literature."[208] The shift in sentiments towards these materials is timely, because they have not always had great

popularity either within or beyond their respective environs. Finkenbine (2004) traces much of this reappraisal of African American primary sources back to the social and political activism of the latter half of the Twentieth century. The introduction of Black Studies programs and their attendant scholarship and writing focused attention on some of the most significant troves of historical treasures, examples of which are included in works edited by Wright (2001) and Finkenbine (2004).[209]

Sources examining the issues that impact the development of African American archival collections are not abundant. A study completed by Mills (1987) is worthy of mention, however. She surveys librarians at "public libraries that collect Black materials for children's collections and identifies and analyzes the factors which have influenced those collections."[210] Her findings reveal that certain criteria such as "budgetary constraints, the perceived need for materials, and interest in the promotion of cultural diversity"[211] affect the authentic reconstruction of "the Black experience."[212] There are similar concerns relative to developing and managing archival collections as well. Further investigation is warranted before an extensive list of challenges may be ascertained. One of the greatest obstacles, perhaps, has been failing to recognize 'the importance of the materials when they were available [and this has resulted in permanent] losses."[213] Dowell (1992) discusses this problem in relation to a project aimed at documenting ethnic communities in the state of California.[214] A lack of awareness about the existence of historical artifacts and an appreciation for their value will continue to threaten the future of ethnic archives, unless repositories take a proactive stance in communities where potential collections may be found.

> … American archivists in general, but … African American archivists in particular, [must] assure that the contributions of African Americans and of members of other minority groups are included in the historical record.[215]

African Americans are widely dispersed across the country and Biddle (2000) recommends using an approach that will capture as much of their history as possible. He urges "local, regional, and state historical societies"[216] to take an active role. Participation at these levels enables archivists to concentrate more closely on the complete histories of communities. Archivists must continually research the history of their constituent communities and create partnerships that involve local residents in institutional programs and projects; this is a critical step in diversifying the holdings of American repositories overall.

3.4. Research in Cognate Areas Relevant to Topic

Among other studies relevant to the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project are two completed at the Union Institute and University and Indiana University during 2002 and 2004, respectively. One comes from the discipline of Humanities and History and the other is from the field of Anthropology.

Brotemarkle (2002) describes *Crossing Division Street: A History of the Orlando African American Community in Orlando, Florida* as the "first comprehensive history of the African American community in Orlando and an exploration of its economic and social decline [217] during the latter half of the past century. This study is significant as a model of how to document a local community, particularly when there exist mostly "vague clues"[218] about a community's past. Insights are provided about specific topical areas and individuals and institutions vital to such an accounting. The work also points out some of the obstacles to reconstructing community memory. Not only were there few "written records dealing with the specific topic,"[219] but the investigator discovered that collecting "local black history [had received low priority in] the archives of local colleges and history museums."[220] In the

alternative, he conducted interviews with a cross-section of the community that included a number of elderly residents in their eighties and nineties. "More than thirty oral histories"[221] were collected among persons from a wide range of occupations and professions in the community. Brotemarkle (2002) inquires about "important events and trends in Orlando's black community and provides details about many fascinating residents of and visitors to the neighborhood."[222] Among the end products of this investigation are "tapes of each oral history interview and the accompanying written transcripts"[223] made available at local cultural institutions in Orlando, Florida.

In the second study *Community Needs and School Life: Bloomington High School, Indiana, in the Progressive Era*, Martin (2004) also describes a model for documenting communities. He examines how the concept of community identity becomes a determinant for how history is recorded. His investigation focuses upon a high school that served as a unifying symbol of community. This "microcosm"[224] of a local society thrived as an institution with an enrollment of Black and White students who "had access to the same curricular tracks"[225] well before integration in public schools was mandatory for the nation as a whole. The same race and class issues that affected the larger society permeated this setting and demarcated the student population. This social underpinning ensured the maintenance over time of a race and class based society. The result was the generation of a school history that represented two culturally separate communities. Bloomington, Indiana's African American community is a major consideration in Martin's study, however. The history of this community is partly the history of the dominant community and vice versa. The most comprehensive picture of this moment in time can be gleaned from the perceptions of all who witnessed it. So, in that context, Martin (2004) shows how the identity of each community

contributed to a different interpretation of the African American past. In order to document this history he found it necessary to draw from more than just the Black perspective on local events. His informational sources included "yearbook depictions and marginalia, biography and autobiography, interviews, school records, artifacts, and news accounts."[226] There are times when participation from the widest possible cross section of a community is necessary even though the focus may be upon a particular ethnic group. This could involve gathering documentary evidence from within the ethnic community as well as from without.

3.5 Summary of What Is Known and Unknown About the Topic

Culturally diverse materials pertaining to "small communities, rural and urban, and the social changes within those communities [as well as] the history of people who have left few written records"[227] have commanded attention from "archivists and historians."[228] Phillips (1995) notes that the interest in "social history dealing with ordinary people, rather than the elite"[229] has influenced the documentation of local communities.

We actually glean more about models for documenting local African American communities through the perspectives of scholars in other fields than from archivists. Literature such as that reviewed in preceding sections tells us very little about collecting African American archives and manuscripts. We are left to assume that the theory and practice of collection development works pretty much the same for all ethnic groups. Various social, political, psychological, and other factors often come to bear as African Americans decide if or where they will deposit their cultural legacy, however. Available archival literature does not address these factors in relation to collection development matters. Clearly, there is a "need for more proactive and targeted policies and strategies"[230] and we need to know how they are employed in the acquisition of African American materials.

Most African American documentary resources may be found at African American affiliated repositories. Scholarly sources reveal virtually nothing about strategies used by archivists at these institutions to cultivate donors and acquire documentary evidence. By contrast, the literature of community outreach, for example, informs us how archivists at mainstream institutions approach the documentation of African American communities. What is the nature of outreach extended by archivists at African American repositories? We also know some of the reasons why African Americans are reluctant to donate their archives to majority White institutions. Does this same reasoning affect donations to African American repositories? At present, we can make no comparisons or contrasts about the two groups of repositories. As for what we have learned about the archival documentation of African American communities, there is much room for further exploration.

3.6 The Contribution This Study Will Make to the Literature

The anticipated, and most apparent contribution of the Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project is providing scholarly information about a topic sparsely addressed in available archival literature. There is no evidence to suggest that a project of this kind has ever been completed for the purpose of comparing and contrasting the efforts of African American and mainstream repositories involved in documenting the history of local African American communities. It is impossible to say definitively, which group of these facilities does the better job in this respect. A second goal of this project is to report what has been done to preserve local African American history and attempt to assess what repositories can do to better serve the documentation needs of their constituent African American communities. The findings of this study may prove invaluable in the identification of an adequate documentation model.

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project lays the groundwork for future investigations of topical areas such as the following:

- the root cause of archival documentation projects that fail and the lessons archivists can learn from unsuccessful initiatives;
- the relationship between Afrocentric collecting initiatives in the United States and abroad;
- the documentation of other major minority groups (Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans); and
- the identification of important, but little-known, local African American sources documenting critical aspects of the history of local African American communities around the nation. There are many such collections in existence around the country. Yet, the greater archival community is unaware of their existence or location.

ENDNOTES

[1] Elaine L. Westbrooks, "African-American Documentary Resources on the World Wide Web: A Survey and Analysis," *Archival Issues* 24(2), 1999: 145. See, also <http://people.cornell.edu.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/pages/elw25/misc/Westbrooks_Rev3.pdf> Available 20 May 2005.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Edward C. Kemp, *Manuscript Solicitation for Libraries, Special Collections, Museums, and Archives* (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1978), 7.

[4] Robert Horton, "Cultivating Our Garden: Archives, Community, and Documentation," *Archival Issues* 26(1), 2001: 27.

[5] Reginald F. Hildebrand, Introduction, *The End of an Era,* by Dorothy Phelps Jones (Durham, NC: Brown Enterprises, 2001), 9.

[6] James M. O'Toole, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990), 28.

[7] Faye Phillips, *Local History Collections in Libraries*. (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1995), 2.

[8] Ibid. For a description of the extent to which local records are used, see, also, Harold Nichols, *Local Studies Librarianship* (New York: K. G. Saur Publishing, 1979), 7.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

4.1 Introduction

Due to the national focus of this investigation, interviewing archivists by telephone was essential for its completion in a timely manner. This was achieved through the use of structured interviews and the long-interview methodology. Procedures for the research included both pilot study and main study phases. The pilot study was conducted with archivists from the state and local communities within North Carolina. Archivists from a variety of repositories, including those situated at educational institutions, public libraries, research centers, and historical societies participated in the main study. The data were coded and analyzed using grounded theory methods described in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.[1] The specific procedures, research sample, instrumentation, data collection phase, and treatment of the data are described at length in the sections that follow.

4.2 Research Methodology

This research utilized the long-interview methodology, the gist of which is implied by its name. That methodology offered several advantages for a study of this kind. The task of identifying potential collections, cultivating prospective donors, and building collections may extend over several months, if not longer, in the archival profession. "Time constraints"[2] made investigating these aspects as they unfolded in their natural setting impractical and

beyond the scope of this research. The long-interview technique made it possible, however, to probe deeply into the topic area and gather data in a manner that did not require "participant observation, unobtrusive observation, or prolonged contact"[3] with study participants. This methodology belongs to the category of naturalistic inquiry that entails an interpretation of the study participants' world "without violating their privacy.[4]

The success of the long-interview methodology has much to do with the questions utilized. Investing in the careful design of an appropriate interview protocol facilitated the data collecting phase, which otherwise might have required considerably more time for completing a study of this kind. The investigator utilized open-ended questions in an attempt to comprehend the documentation of African American communities from the perspective of archivists. Utilizing a general conversational approach and starting with "biographical questions"[5] helped set the stage for the main part of the inquiry. The use of various "prompting strategies"[6] also facilitated this investigation.

4.3 Specific Procedures

Following the design of the interview protocol, this research continued with the identification and selection of prospective repositories for inclusion in the pilot and main studies. The recruitment of archivists began subsequent to the approval granted for the study by the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during September 2006. Firstly, archivists were recruited for participation in the pilot study. The recruitment of participants for the main study occurred simultaneously with the mounting of the pilot study. Upon obtaining the necessary permissions to interview informants for the main study, data collection began during mid October 2006 and continued until mid February of 2007. The study concluded with coding and analysis of the data and a report of the

findings. The various procedures are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. Copies of the interview protocol and other related documents are included among the Appendices.

4.4 Research Sample

The selection of an appropriate research sample for this investigation was guided by the same principle that applies generally to studying African American history through archives and manuscripts. Lewis and McQuirter (2001) recommend that, "researchers should first consult the institutions that primarily focus on collecting materials on African-Americana."[7] Largely African American institutions composed the first category of repositories considered, since they "constitute the major source of information on the cultural heritage and historical development of [African Americans] in the United States."[8] Secondly, various European American institutions with a stated mission to include African American materials among their holdings were considered. The research sample included a mix of racially diverse, well- and modestly-endowed, large and small institutions that document African American communities at the local and regional levels. Relevant facilities were identified through the following sources: the *ArchivesUSA* database; the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*; *The Harvard Guide to African-American History*; *Guide to Information Resources in Ethnic Museum, Library, and Archival Collections in the United States;* the web site for the Association of Research Libraries; and the general literature of archives. The sources were consulted in an attempt to select a sample comprised of libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and cultural research centers. Factors such as descriptions of repository holdings, types of materials solicited, collection size, and repository mission statements were utilized as criteria for selecting repositories for inclusion

in the project. A total of 159 repositories from across the United States were identified as the initial pool from which the research sample was drawn. The initial pool included repositories located at twenty-five historically African American educational institutions; forty-one historically White educational institutions; eighteen African American museums, three historically White museums; thirty state and regional historical societies; fifteen public libraries; eight African American research centers; four White research centers; and fifteen state library archives. No doubt, a number of facilities were omitted because adequate records concerning the identification and existence of some repositories and their holdings were not available for research. This lack of records pertaining to certain repositories was a recurrent problem during the course of identifying potential facilities for inclusion in the initial pool. Librarians, historians, and a number of study informants provided useful information and recommendations concerning other previously unidentified archivists and repositories for consideration throughout the study. Included within the initial pool were several archivists and repositories identified through such recommendations.

The initial pool of 159 repositories was ordered into two groups with respect to their classification as African American or majority-White organizations. Each group was then ranked according to the age of repositories and/or the extent of their collecting histories for African American materials. Repositories in existence for thirty years or longer, and/or having collecting histories of thirty or more years, comprised the first level. Those in existence fewer than thirty years and/or having collecting histories of fewer than thirty years duration composed the second level. This rationale for ranking repositories was based upon the belief that the length of a facility's existence and collecting history with respect to African American materials provided some indication of a record of success and continuity

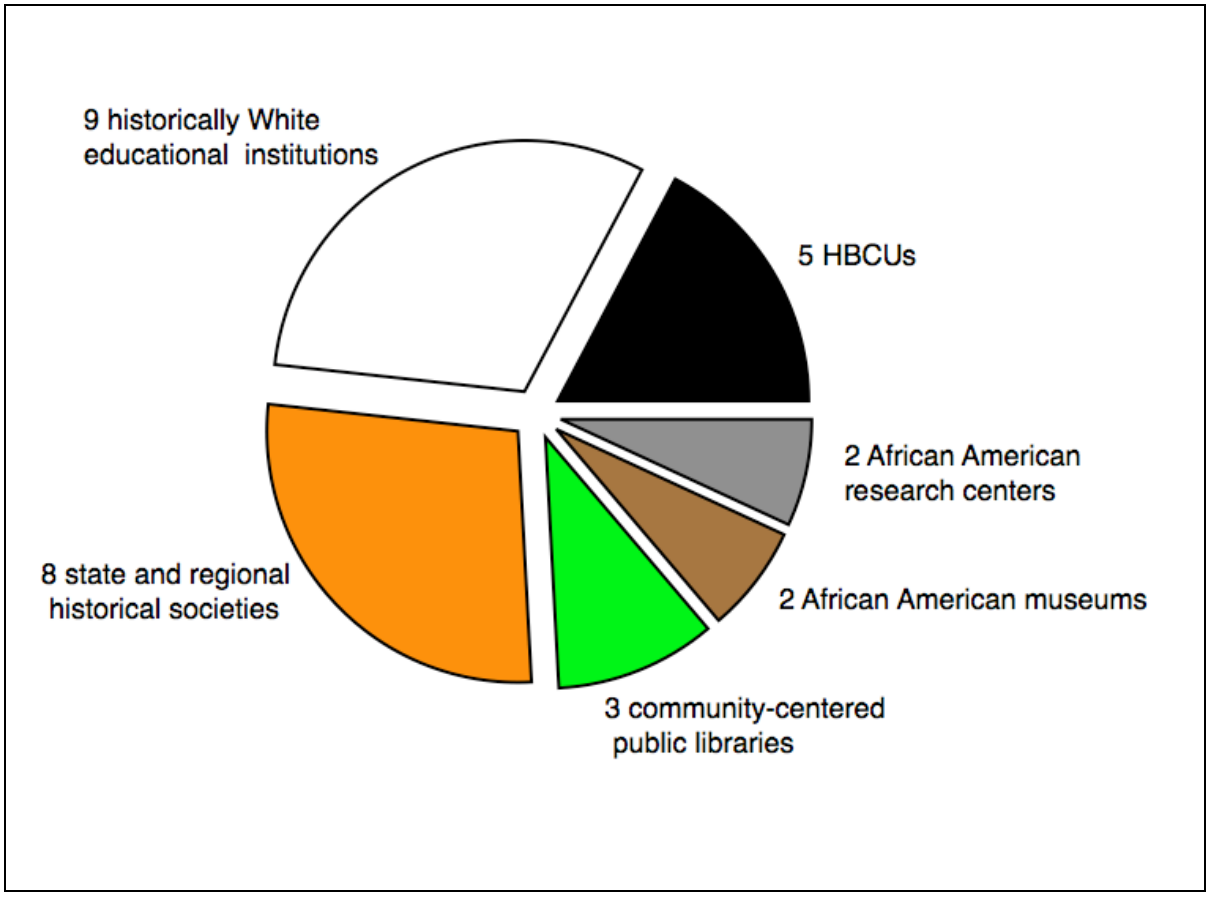
of documentation. There was some anticipation that the oldest repositories with the most extensive collecting histories would, perhaps, have some of the most well defined strategies for documenting and preserving them. Documentation efforts begun during the past thirty years were particularly significant, considering this period provided a thrust for much African American collecting, as noted by Collier-Thomas (1990)[9], Finkenbine (2004)[10], and Montgomery 2001)[11]. Conrad (1989) also recognized that this period marked "a revival of interest in local history, both as a subject and as a basis for historical research"[12] in general.

Similar to the identification of repositories, the investigator gained initial access to the sample population of archivists by examining repository websites to identify prospective participants and obtain personal contact information. Thereafter, a formal letter, a copy of which is included in the Appendices, was emailed to introduce the investigator and the project and extend invitations for archivists to participate. Copies of this letter were emailed to seventy archivists. A period of ten days was set aside within which to follow-up the letters of invitation with phone calls and/or email messages, in an attempt to contact prospective participants and schedule interviews.

Among the seventy archivists recruited for the main study, twenty-two neither acknowledged the initial letter of invitation, nor the follow-up phone calls and email messages. Thirteen declined the initial invitation for various reasons. Seven provided appropriate referrals to other members of their staffs. The remaining twenty-eight accepted the invitation to participate in this research. Without waiting to receive follow-up phone calls and email messages from the researcher, twenty among these latter twenty-eight took the initiative to respond to the letter of invitation. They also acknowledged the importance of the research and suggested possible dates and times for scheduling the interviews. These twenty-

eight archivists, along with one who participated in the pilot study, constituted the sample for the main study. As depicted in Figure 1, they represented repositories located at five historically African American educational institutions; nine historically White educational institutions; two African American museums; eight state and regional historical societies; three community-centered public libraries with particular interests in developing local collections and; two African American research centers.

Figure 1. Location of the Repositories



The various educational institutions included research-extensive and research-intensive universities as well as masters and baccalaureate colleges and universities.

Rapley (2004) urges that, "the process of finding interviewees and setting up interviews is … central to the outcomes of the research,"[13] and he also refers to the scholarship of Rubin and Rubin (1995)[14] as a guideline in that regard. The investigator sought to recruit a number of archivists from the initial pool of 159 repositories. Because the study utilized grounded theory methods to explain the findings, the actual number of archivists necessary for recruitment could not be established when the data collection phase commenced. The collection and analysis of data continued until redundancies were found among the data. Redundancies in the data were highly evident after the first fifteen interviews. Thirteen additional interviews were completed, due to the national focus of the investigation.

Participation was solicited from archivists who had responsibilities for appraising and selecting primary sources, rather than processing and describing such materials. Archivists whose responsibilities focused strictly upon processing were eliminated from consideration because they generally were not involved in making decisions and devising strategies about collection development matters. The objective was to recruit participants for a representative sample evenly divided between archivists from (1) predominantly African American repositories and (2) predominantly European American repositories with mission statements that provided for collecting local African American materials. The investigator also attempted to select an ethnically diverse sample that included African American and non-African American participants. The study population comprised sixteen African Americans,

eleven Whites, and two archivists from other ethnic groups. The latter two informants are members of population groups with limited representation in the archival profession.

4.5 Instrumentation

The interview protocol, by design, required approximately forty-five minutes for completion and was composed of four main areas. Included among these were (1) Biographical Data; (2) Repository Data; (3) Collections and Documentation; and (4) Closing. The Biographical Data section included questions pertaining to archivists' job titles, their length of service in the archival profession, and their responsibilities for collecting materials. Questions in the Repository Data section were concerned with the dates repositories were established, their missions, and collecting focus. The Collections and Documentation section included the most critical questions. This section inquired about the inclusion of local African American materials among repository holdings, with respect to institutional policies, outreach activities, donor cultivation, documentation strategies, and critical issues that affect documentation initiatives. The Closing section sought information concerning what archivists think should be done to adequately document local African American communities.

The majority of the interviews were completed within the allotted time period. Interviews with two informants required approximately one and one-half hours for completion. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix H.

4.6 Pilot Study

Constituting a diverse group with respect to race and gender, twelve North Carolina archivists were recruited for the pilot study. Five of these archivists accepted the invitation to participate in this phase of the research. Included among this number were four Whites, one

African American, three males, and two females. Three informants participated in face-to-face interviews and two others were interviewed via telephone. Where the pilot study was concerned, Soonthorndhaha (1989) advises that such "pretesting should be done more than once and with a number of respondents"[15] Also, "the respondents chosen for the "mock" interviews should be as similar as possible to the actual respondents."[16] All of the archivists recruited for this phase of the research were adept at developing local African American collections and were affiliated with repositories similar to the variety represented in the main study.

Powell and Connoway (2004) note that, "it is highly recommended that interview schedules be pretested."[17] Doing so provided an opportunity to test the interview protocol for flaws, determine the clarity of the interview questions, observe how aspects such as "non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning,"[18] monitor interview length, and make any revisions deemed necessary prior to launching the main study. The interview protocol warranted minor revisions with respect to one question included in the Collections and Documentation section. Advantages of mounting a pilot study are further noted in the writing of Wengraf (2001), who states that, "almost certainly, your design and your practice will be improved in unexpected ways,"[19] as a consequence. Wilson (1996) shares this view and calls attention to one other aspect as well. He writes that:

> An important purpose of a pilot is to devise a set of codes or response categories for each question which will cover, as comprehensively as possible, the full range of responses which may be given in reply to the question in the main investigation.[20]

Informants from the pilot study were initially excluded from participation in the main study. However, these archivists provided a wealth of invaluable data pertaining to their efforts to document African American history generally and at the local level. The insights of one of these informants resonated throughout the investigation and merited inclusion in the main study. With permission, data gathered from that informant were used in the final analysis and reporting.

4.7 Data Collection

A combination of person-to-person and telephone interviews were earmarked as preferences for collecting data for the main study. The study population's wide geographic dispersiveness beyond the area where this research was based necessitated using the latter approach throughout this phase of the investigation. Consequently, "some of the non-verbal cues which affect the interaction between interviewer and respondent [were] missing – body language, for example."[21] The absence of such did not limit the opportunity to follow up with appropriate questions. Pauses, key terms, and the like served as cues, compensating for the lack of others.

Utilizing telephone interviews proved advantageous in several ways and resulted in a "significant savings in time and cost in contrast to the personal interview."[22] As Robson (2002) observes, this approach provided "many of the advantages of face-to-face interviewing: a high response rate, correction of obvious misunderstandings, possible use of probes, etc."[23] Conducting interviews in this manner also enabled the investigator to take notes as deemed necessary during the interviews, without creating distractions for the informants.

Archivists expressed their willingness to participate in this project by agreeing to schedule an interview. Their participation was completely voluntary, and they had the right to terminate their involvement and withdraw from the study at any time during its course. All interviews took place on dates and during times mutually agreeable to the informants and the investigator. Participating archivists identified locations such as their workplaces or other sites at which they preferred to receive interview calls. A Pearlcorder Microcassette System 2000 was used to collect data and permissions for audio recording were secured in advance.

4.8 Treatment of the Data

This phase of the research involved coding and analyzing the data within and across two primary groups, according to the racial identity of the repositories represented. These groups were further stratified into eight secondary groups that denoted the racial identity and gender of the participating archivists. Table 1 provides descriptive information pertaining to the ethnicity of archivists in the secondary groups.

Table 1. Data Analysis By Ethnic Group

PRIMARY GROUP	SECONDARY GROUP	ETHNIC GROUP DESCRIPTION
A	*1A*	*Black male archivists at African American repositories*
	2A	*Black female archivists at African American repositories*
	3A	*Other ethnic female archivists at African American repositories*
B	*2A*	*Black male archivists at White repositories*
	2B	*White male Archivists at White repositories*
	2C	*Black female Archivists at White repositories*
	2D	*White female archivists at White repositories*
	2E	*Other ethnic female archivists at White repositories*

Respectively, and to protect their anonymity, archivists and their repositories were assigned unique identification numbers (A1 through A29) and (R-1 through R-29) for reporting purposes.

A review and detailed writing of the field notes immediately succeeded the completion of each interview. As soon as possible thereafter, the field notes and interview tapes were transcribed using Microsoft Word 2004 word processing software for the Macintosh. This treatment of the "unstructured data,"[24] as Boulton and Hammersley (1996) describe "written texts of various sorts,"[25] which "are not already coded in terms of the researcher's analytical categories,"[26] laid the foundation for the analysis phase.

Because this study utilized grounded theory, data analysis actually began with the completion of the first interview. This phase paralleled the collection of the data and continued with the main analysis. Each interview transcript was subjected to an initial

reading, which provided an opportunity to scrutinize the data for the presence of "specific themes that emerge[d] from the interviews"[27] and identify issues critical for pursuit during conversations with other informants. The development of various codes for the major data categories resulted from this examination and emphasis was placed upon subsequent data collecting.

Where the coding of the data was concerned, two categories of qualitative analysis approaches were feasible for this research: "template approaches"[28] and "editing approaches."[29] Robson (2002) explains that the first category provides for obtaining, appropriate codes "on an a priori basis (e.g. derived from theory or research questions) or from an initial read of the data."[30] As implied by the category name, "these codes then serve as a template … for data analysis."[31] An advantage to using template approaches was their usefulness in depicting "descriptive summaries of the text … supplemented by matrices, network maps, flow charts and diagrams."[32] Considered less restrictive, the second category of coding approaches involved limited "a priori codes and codes are based on the researcher's interpretation of the meanings or patterns in the texts"[33] These approaches are "typified by *grounded theory* approaches,"[34] "discovering theory from data."[35]

Some scholars favor the editing approaches for qualitative data analysis. In the best of all possible worlds, however, a combined template-editing approach seemed ideally suited for this project. The research questions as well as "key themes, patterns, ideas, and concepts within [the] data"[36] were used "to tease out the theoretical possibilities"[37] for explaining how archivists document African American communities. A number of codes were identified as the interviews were conducted.

Following the development of the codes, the data categories were compared and contrasted within and across the primary and secondary groups presented in Table 1. The analysis continued until new themes and ideas ceased to emerge from the data. When and where appropriate, tables were utilized to display and summarize various aspects of the data.

ENDNOTES

[1] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

[2] Steven J. Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), 80.

[3] Grant McCracken, *The Long Interview* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988), 11.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, 34.

[6] Ibid, 36.

[7] Earl Lewis and Marya McQuirter, "Manuscript Collections," in *The Harvard Guide to African-American History*, et al. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2001), 45.

[8] Lubomyr R. Wynar and Lois Buttlar. *Guide to Ethnic Museums, Libraries, and Archives in the United States*. Kent, OH: Program for the Study of Ethnic Publications, School of Library Science, Kent State University, 1978, p. ix.

[9] See Bettye Collier-Thomas, "Present Programs and Future Needs," in *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History*, Sinnette, Elinor Des Verney, W. Paul Coates, and Thomas C. Battle (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1990), 160.

[10] See Roy E. Finkenbine, *Sources of the African American Past: Primary Sources in American History* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), vii.

[11] See Elvin Montgomery, Jr., *Collecting African American History: A Celebration of America's Black Heritage Through Documents, Artifacts, and Collectibles*. (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2001), 9.

[12] James Conrad, *Developing Local History Programs in Community Libraries* (Chicago, IL: American Library Association), 1989, 3.

[13] Tim Rapley, "Interviews" in Clive Seal, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium, and David Silverman, eds. *Qualitative Research Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 17.

[14] See Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 65-76.

[15] Amara Soonthorndhada, "Constructing Qualitative Research Interview Guidelines" in Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig, George A. Attig, and Wathinee Boonchalaksi, eds. *A Field Manual on Selected Qualitative Research Methods* (Nakhon Pathom, Thailand: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1989), 68.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ronald R. Powell and Lynn Silpigni Connoway, *Basic Research Methods for Librarians* (Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004), 147.

[18] Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 273.

[19] Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 187.

[20] Michael Wilson, "Asking Questions," in *Data Collection and Analysis*, ed. Roger Sapsford and Victor Jupp, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 103.

[21] Wilson, "Asking Questions," 94.

[22] Powell and Connoway, *Basic Research Methods for Librarians*, 155.

[23] Robson, *Real World Research*, 282.

[24] David Boulton and Martin Hammersley, "Analysis of Unstructured Data" in Roger Sapsford and Victor Jupp, eds. *Data Collection and Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 282.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 70.

[28] Robson, *Real World Research*, 458.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 1.

[36] Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 410-411.

[37] Robson, *Real World Research*, 494.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Profile of Collections and Repositories

Holdings at nine African American repositories ranged in size from thirty-two to eight hundred total collections. Some informants described their holdings in linear feet as well as the number of items therein. Table 2 provides information pertaining to the ages of the twelve African American repositories included in this study, along with the extents of their various African American collections. Some of these materials are locally based and others are regional and national collections.

Several among the informants at African American repositories also reported that their facilities collected small quantities of non-African American materials. Some such primary sources pertained to Whites, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups. Generally, however, these materials documented various interactions between African Americans and non-African Americans that somehow contributed to the construction of African American cultural memory.

The twelve African American repositories were affiliated with a variety of entities. Included among these were cultural research centers, public libraries, historically Black colleges and universities, a museum, and a small historical society.

Table 2. African American Collections at African American Repositories

REPOSITORY ID #	REPOSITORY AGE	YRS. COLLECTING AF-AM	TOTAL AF-AM COLLECTIONS	LINEAR FEET	TOTAL ITEMS
R-4	*21*	*21*	*125 - 130*	*--*	*4K*
R-5	*81*	*81*	*800*	*--*	*> 10M*
R-6	*30*	*30*	*190*	*--*	*2M*
R-7	*4*	*4*	*250 - 300*	*--*	*--*
R-15	*40*	*40*	*~ 600*	*--*	*> 15M*
R-16	*32*	*32*	*--*	*--*	*> 40K*
R-17	*92*	*92*	*650*	*17K*	*--*
R-18	*81*	*81*	*--*	*> 7K*	*--*
R-22	*37*	*37*	*32*	*1K*	*--*
R-23	*30*	*30*	*--*	*--*	*600K*
R-28	*46*	*46*	*> 160*	*--*	*--*
R-29	*11*	*11*	*> 60*	*300 - 400*	*--*

Among other things, Table 2 shows that the ages of these repositories paralleled the number of years they had endeavored to develop their African American collections. These facilities had documented African American history from the time they were established and operated expressly for that purpose. Table 2 also illustrates the sizes of the collections, most of which were donated, in relation to the ages and collection histories of repositories. As expected, the largest collections were dispersed among some of the oldest facilities. This study found that holdings consisting of more than one hundred collections at African American repositories generally resided at facilities with collecting histories spanning twenty-one or more years. The longer collecting histories suggested that some of these repositories were more successful in documenting local communities due, in part, to the amount of time they expended in that regard. Local materials accounted for less than ten percent of the total holdings at one repository and comprised from fifteen to fifty-four

percent of total holdings at five others. Meanwhile, the entire collection at one among the twelve repositories consisted of local materials.

The relatively brief collecting history of repository R-7 and the size of its total holdings commanded attention. This facility came into existence through the leadership, planning, and support of high-ranking political officials, influential community leaders, and ordinary citizens from all walks of life in a particular local African American community. An informant described this facility as an institution with overwhelming support from African American community members. There was widespread agreement throughout the community concerning the significance of the facility. For example, "community organizations and people who would be using this archive [provided input pertaining to] what they wanted to see in the library."[1] Various social organizations, professional groups, and individuals contributed financial resources towards its development. Informant A7 implied that fostering this kind of interest and support also created a framework for soliciting collections from donors, who enthusiastically surrendered their historical materials. "A donor wall"[2] on permanent display publicly identified all contributors and solidified within the community a sense of ownership for the facility and its holdings. Also worthy of mention in relation to collection development, the archivist was a lifelong native of the community and had earned donors' trust through social and professional affiliations prior to soliciting collections for the archives.

Among fourteen of the seventeen majority White repositories included in the study, African American holdings ranged in size from fewer than five up to one thousand total collections. At another among these seventeen facilities, an informant reported that the overall African American holdings consisted of approximately "three hundred different items

available for research."[3] These materials were acquired from various individuals, groups, and businesses situated throughout the local and regional areas served by the repository. Table 3 illustrates the ages of the seventeen repositories and their respective overall and African American collecting histories. This table also shows the total number of such collections held by these entities in relation to their ages and collecting histories.

Table 3. African American and Overall Collections at Majority White Repositories

REPOSITORY ID #	REPOSITORY AGE	TOTAL COLLECTIONS	YRS. COLLECTING AF-AM	TOTAL AF-AM COLLECTIONS
R-1	*27*	*>241*	*27*	*15 - 20*
R-2	*39*	*3,500*	*21*	*17*
R-3	*45*	*75 - 100*	*2*	*17*
R-8	*35*	*950*	*26*	*24*
R-9	*14*	*1,000*	*11*	*60*
R-10	*115*	*--*	*12*	*10*
R-11	*54*	*165*	*10*	*31*
R-12	*114*	*2K - 3K*	*20*	*200 - 300*
R-13	*122*	*--*	*30*	*12*
R-14	*181*	*--*	*10*	*2*
R-19	*127*	*3,500*	*16*	*~ 300 items*
R-20	*30*	*350*	*11*	*7 - 10*
R-21	*30*	*1,900*	*30*	*100*
R-24	*101*	*> 4,000*	*20*	*--*
R-25	*139*	*>3, 000*	*35*	*1,000*
R-26	*113*	*>10K c.f. **	*12*	*100*
R-27	*121*	*>13K c.f. **	*40*	*> 855*

* cubic feet

Nine majority White repositories had been in operation for more than a hundred years and eight others had operated for periods ranging from fourteen to fifty-four years. Compared to their overall collecting histories, as well as the African American facilities represented in Table 2, eight among the seventeen White facilities were yet in their infancy where the sizes of their African American holdings were concerned. Each of these eight had fewer than twenty-five such collections and the average length of their collecting histories for such materials spanned slightly more than seventeen years. Most of these eight facilities were affiliated with large and small historical societies and large research-extensive and research-intensive universities. The largest African American holdings consisting of one hundred or more distinct collections resided at four repositories dating back more than one hundred years and another in existence for thirty years. Three of these facilities were affiliated with a large historical society, a public library, and a large research-extensive university, respectively.

5.2 Extending Outreach

5.2.1 Introduction

Extending outreach is a necessary first step in the process of documenting the history of communities in general. All archivists engage in this process, and the study showed no differences between the approaches used by African American and non-African American practitioners, where local African American communities are concerned. The informants utilized a variety of strategies to establish initial contacts with donors and make known their institutions' interests in collecting relevant materials. Included among these were the use of educational outreach strategies, programs and services, and publicity for repositories and existing collections. While some informants employed a single strategy, others relied upon

some combination of strategies. Several participants viewed outreach strategies as synonymous with trust building strategies.

5.2.2 Education

Sixty-two percent of the informants reported that they extended some form of educational outreach to African American communities. Archivists employed this strategy to impart information concerning two primary aspects of archival work. First, they emphasized the significance of African American archival materials and the reasons why donors should take appropriate steps to preserve and deposit them at archival facilities. Second, archivists provided information about their respective repositories and the roles these entities play in preserving the historical record of African Americans. In most instances, archivists extended outreach with respect to either one or the other of these two aspects. Slightly more than seventeen percent of the informants provided responses concerning the use of both strategies.

In providing educational outreach pertaining to the significance of archival materials, a number of informants routinely detected negative attitudes among prospective donors. Some archivists reported that African Americans often seemed not to appreciate the level of interest their lives and contributions generated for researchers. The study found that such sentiments are by no means unique to African American communities. White archivists acknowledged that donors from White and other ethnic communities frequently show a similar lack of interest in donating their materials to repositories. To overcome this impediment to the documentation process, archivists advocated extending outreach earlier in the life cycle of targeted communities.

As evidenced through the professional literature and various informants' responses, archivists generally target adult members of communities when extending educational and

other forms of outreach. Both African American and White archivists strongly favored including children and youth members from the community as well. They believed that such inclusiveness is mutually beneficial for archivists and students at all educational levels. Informants A27, A13, and A2 identified activities such as "partnerships between repositories and schools"[4] and "fieldtrips"[5] that include "tours of collections"[6] as ways to help familiarize younger members of the community with archives and instill a sense of appreciation for the preservation of history. Other forms of educational outreach extended to younger community members included internships for African American college students with an interest in archival careers. Several informants also utilized educational outreach strategies to advise prospective donors about care and preservation matters, even though the appraisal and acquisition of collections might not become a reality until a later date.

Educating donors about the repositories themselves was as basic as providing information about the evolution of facilities and describing "the archival process [as it relates to] collecting, preserving, and making materials available for research."[7] There was wide agreement among the study informants concerning the significance of this strategy. "Most people in the general population don't understand what archival [repositories] are, why they exist, and what [these facilities] are trying to do."[8]

Extending educational outreach in relation to the work and mission of archival facilities also had an added benefit for donors concerned with details such as selecting the repositories most appropriate for their materials. Here, some archivists addressed matters pertaining to the geographic suitability of their facilities and the extent of the services they could realistically expect to provide for collections, based upon available resources. Table 4

shows the results for archivists whose repositories provided educational outreach to local African American communities.

Table 4. Educational Outreach to African American Communities

AFRICAN AMERICAN REPOSITORIES			MAJORITY-WHITE REPOSITORIES		
REPOSITORY ID #	EDUCATION ABOUT MATERIALS	EDUCATION ABOUT REPOSITORY	REPOSITORY ID #	EDUCATION ABOUT MATERIALS	EDUCATION ABOUT REPOSITORY
R-4			*R-1*		
R-5			*R-2*		
R-6			*R-3*		
R-7			*R-8*		
R-15			*R-9*		
R-16			*R-10*		
R-17			*R-11*		
R-18			*R-12*		
R-22			*R-13*		
R-23			*R-14*		
R-28			*R-19*		
R-29			*R-20*		
			R-21		
			R-24		
			R-25		
			R-26		
			R-27		
	4 (33%)	*1 (8%)*		*13 (76%)*	*5 (29%)*

= Form of Educational Outreach extended

= Form of Educational Outreach not extended

As evidenced in Table 4, there were significant differences in the levels of educational outreach extended by African American and majority-White repositories. The study suggested that the ages of repositories and their respective collecting histories with local African American materials were factors in that regard. African American repositories had, from the time of inception, demonstrated a commitment to documenting and preserving local African Americana, thus acknowledging the value of these treasures. By contrast, only two White repositories, R-1 and R-21, as seen in Table 3, had collecting histories that began for local African American materials at the same time as their collecting histories for non-African American materials. The majority of White repositories had brief collecting histories. Nine had been in existence for more than a hundred years with collecting histories ranging from ten to forty years for local African American materials. No doubt, the long delays in acknowledging the importance of these materials and the recent interests of some White facilities figured prominently into the need to extend outreach. Informant A9 observed that the key was not just convincing African American donors that their papers are important, but convincing them as to why White repositories "would be interested"[9] in their history and contributions.

Thirty-three percent of African American repositories extended outreach in relation to the significance of archival materials, and slightly more than eight percent extended outreach concerning repositories. The informants who extended educational outreach at the African American repositories had served ten years, or less, in their current positions. Meanwhile, among the archivists at White repositories, slightly more than seventy-six percent extended educational outreach with respect to the significance of archival materials; twenty-nine percent did so in regards to repositories. The majority of archivists who extended educational

outreach at White repositories had eight years of service, or less, in their current positions. This study indicated that while educational outreach benefited community members, it seemingly proved more critical for archivists attempting to get a foothold in communities and gain the confidence of prospective donors.

5.2.3 Programs and Services

Slightly more than seventy-two percent of the informants overall reported that their facilities offered programs and services that extended outreach to local African American communities and cultivated relationships with the members therein. Outreach through programs included a variety of repository-sponsored events held at some archival facilities. Among these, informant A7 described a program that featured a public "recognition for everyone who has given money to do anything"[10] to support the development and operations of a repository. This facility had widespread support, including financial backing, from the local African American community since the time of its inception. Informant A26 reported that another repository mounted a successful "exhibit pertaining to the African American community. That exhibit later became a traveling exhibit that went to various communities across the state."[11] This same informant reported that, following the acquisition of a high-profile African American collection, the repository held "a major dedication [program] for the collection,"[12] and many members of the African American and non-African American communities, as well as dignitaries attended.

The success of this program was particularly significant, because the repository had at one time deliberately excluded African Americana from its holdings for decades. The two latter programs served to make amends to the African American community and showed an institutional commitment to documenting its history. Informant A19 represented a repository

with a similar collecting history and a past practice of excluding African Americans and "advocated for [presenting repository-sponsored] programming out in the Black community, [rather than] at the institution."[13] This informant suggested that doing so further attests to the genuineness of the repository's intentions and provides a more secure environment for community members to whom outreach is extended.

One repository indirectly extended outreach through programming by serving as a host for public programs sponsored by community groups, educational institutions, and religious entities. Such groups occasionally utilized meeting rooms and other resources available at this facility. Additionally, a number of archivists stated that they frequently attended and/or participated in cultural events that various groups held within African American communities. Regular attendance at these programs and events proved especially beneficial for White archivists and facilitated in their becoming known to community members. Some White archivists also felt that continually receiving frequent invitations from various community groups over the course of time indicated a measure of their acceptance by community members.

Some repositories extended outreach through an array of services that benefited local African American communities. A number of archivists utilized public speaking engagements to inform prospective donors about "what is in collections and how to [donate materials] and support collections"[14] and repositories where such may be found. In a similar vein, informant A29 came to be identified as a resource person, "interacting with the greater community"[15] regarding various aspects of local history documented through an African American facility's holdings. Serving as a resource person provided an opportunity to market the facility and its collections and services. Informant A17 described another marketing

approach and reported that, "we sought to make ourselves available as an archival repository for [a broad] range of Black organizations [and] … a hundred or so organizations"[16] accepted the offer to deposit materials at this African American facility.

In addition to the services mentioned above, several African American and White repositories provided archival assistance to church groups. A facility, "for a nominal fee, microfilmed and stored master copies of church records for preservation purposes."[17] In exchange for the opportunity to acquire copies of church photographs, another facility "copied materials, especially those of a fragile nature, and allowed donors to maintain their original copies."[18] Repositories offered similar workshops for individuals from other segments of the community as well. Some provided training in the basic identification and processing of materials that prospective donors were not yet ready to part with. Subsequently, a few repositories acquired collections comprised of some of these materials. Table 5 illustrates the number of archivists whose repositories utilized programs and services to extend outreach to local African American communities.

As a result of extending outreach through programs and services, some repositories likely acquired collections that various groups and individuals might not have otherwise donated to particular facilities. The study also suggested that some repositories, perhaps, acquired larger numbers of collections because they utilized this approach to extend outreach to African American donors.

Table 5. Programs and Services Outreach to African American Communities

AFRICAN AMERICAN REPOSITORIES		MAJORITY-WHITE REPOSITORIES	
REPOSITORY ID #	PROGRAMS & SERVICES OUTREACH	REPOSITORY ID #	PROGRAMS & SERVICES OUTREACH
R-4	▨	*R-1*	▨
R-5	▨	*R-2*	▨
R-6	▨	*R-3*	▨
R-7	▨	*R-8*	
R-15		*R-9*	▨
R-16	▨	*R-10*	
R-17	▨	*R-11*	▨
R-18		*R-12*	
R-22		*R-13*	▨
R-23	▨	*R-14*	▨
R-28	▨	*R-19*	▨
R-29		*R-20*	▨
		R-21	
		R-24	▨
		R-25	▨
		R-26	▨
		R-27	▨
	8 (66.6%)		*13 (76%)*

▨ = Programs & Services Outreach extended

☐ = Programs & Services Outreach not extended

The various programs and services described in this section were used with similar frequencies by both groups of repositories. As Table 5 shows, archivists at African American repositories reported that nearly sixty-seven percent of their facilities extended outreach through this means. By comparison, slightly more that seventy-six percent of the archivists at

White repositories reported their facilities did likewise. Responses particularly from informants A7 and A17 shed light upon the benefits that may flow from successful programs and services outreach. These archivists' repositories were recognized as a part of the local community fabric, and conveyed to donor communities that materials procured from the community yet belonged to the community. Informant A7 reported that, consequently, community members publicly expressed ownership for repository R-7, which had acquired between two hundred and fifty and three hundred collections during its four years of existence.

5.2.4 Publicity

To some extent, repositories publicized their African American holdings through education outreach and programs and services. They achieved wider publicity through the use of various media sources, however. Thirty-four percent of the informants discussed the significance of this outreach approach as a tool for (1) providing information about existing collections and (2) soliciting and procuring greater numbers of collections from prospective donors.

Four among the twenty-nine archivists reported that their repositories had used or received some direct benefit from advertising collections and/or promoting facilities through local newspapers, electronic media, and brochures and other materials generated by repositories. Some informants identified African American newspapers in their localities through which they anticipated publishing related articles and announcements. African American churches were also identified as potential sources through which archivists may distribute additional information pertaining to future solicitation and documentation initiatives. Utilizing churches stood out among best practices because these institutions have

the capability to reach deep into communities to distribute information and rally support for a wide variety of social and cultural endeavors.

Aside from its usefulness as a vehicle for communication between repositories and their constituent communities, one informant viewed publicity for its worth as an inter-repository information tool. This archivist expressed the "hope that archivists who are collecting will always inform the [archival] community about what has been preserved,"[19] preferably through online sources. Table 6 shows the number of archivists whose repositories utilized publicity to extend outreach to African American communities.

Table 6. Publicity Outreach to African American Communities

AFRICAN AMERICAN REPOSITORIES		MAJORITY-WHITE REPOSITORIES	
REPOSITORY ID #	PUBLICITY	REPOSITORY ID #	PUBLICITY
R-4	▨	*R-1*	▨
R-5		*R-2*	▨
R-6	▨	*R-3*	
R-7		*R-8*	
R-15	▨	*R-9*	▨
R-16		*R-10*	
R-17		*R-11*	
R-18		*R-12*	
R-22		*R-13*	
R-23		*R-14*	
R-28		*R-19*	
R-29	▨	*R-20*	
		R-21	
		R-24	▨
		R-25	▨
		R-26	▨
		R-27	
	4 (33%)		*6 (35%)*

▨ = Publicity Outreach extended

□ = Publicity Outreach not extended

As this table shows, there was limited use of publicity as an outreach tool. Thirty-three percent of informants from African American repositories and thirty-five percent from White repositories utilized this strategy. Although publicity outreach contributed to success

in documenting some local African American communities, the study found that it had less of an impact than other outreach tools. This was further explained by the fact that most repositories did not utilize publicity outreach strictly for the purpose of increasing the size of their holdings. In light of that, five archivists at African American entities reported that their facilities made limited use of publicity outreach because they were not actively collecting local materials, due to (1) a lack space for housing new holdings, (2) the accumulation of significant backlogs (some as high as forty-five to sixty percent) of unprocessed materials, and/or (3) a lack of staff resources sufficient to continue the pursuit of new collections.

5.2.5 Summary

Outreach strategies lay the groundwork for documentation initiatives and provide archivists with entrée to communities. In some settings, these strategies parallel those used to gain the trust of donors. This study identified three outreach strategies used by archivists in their attempts to document local African American communities: (1) educating community members about the significance of primary source materials and the uses scholars make of them; (2) providing programs and services that encourage community participation in preserving local history; and (3) utilizing the media and other printed materials to publicize information about repositories and their holdings. Archivists at African American and majority-White repositories reported the use of similar strategies for getting a foothold in African American communities. Among the informants, the use of programs and services had the highest priority, followed by the use of educational outreach, and then publicity. Archivists at some repositories indicated that their facilities relied upon a single strategy, and others used a combination of strategies to extend outreach.

5.3 Gaining Community Trust

5.3.1 Introduction

The significance of gaining trust in local African American communities became a common thread throughout the conversations with archivists. Whereas outreach strategies largely facilitated in establishing initial contacts with donors, gaining trust provided a means through which archivists actually convinced donors to deposit and give over custody of their materials to various facilities. The study suggested that this may well be the most important step of all in the documentation process. Like extending outreach, gaining trust is something that all archivists must do in the course of acquiring primary source materials. Earning trust also entailed a number of specific strategies that hinged upon the reputation of repositories; the reputation of archivists; the use of various outreach strategies; the support of advisory boards; and personal relationships developed between archivists and donors from African American communities.

5.3.2 The Difference Race Makes

The issue of race commands such presence that archivists almost need not call it by name to convey how it affected their work in documenting African American history. Yet, they did discuss the difference that race makes, sometimes implicitly, and other times with an unabashed explicitness. The significance of racial identity remained detectable as an undercurrent throughout the investigation. Responses from some African American archivists resonated in that regard. One informant noted that, "race is the unique factor in collecting,"[20] often determining the success or failure of a documentation initiative. Another called attention to the widely held belief that African American archivists supposedly encounter the least amount of difficulty navigating African American communities. The study found,

however, that these archivists have to make a concerted effort, the same as other archivists, to cultivate and gain the trust of African American donors. In doing so,

> [y]ou can't be ignorant about the history of race and race relations in the nation. Nor, can you be ignorant about [these matters in the targeted] community. [Perhaps], that's the greatest violation. If you make the error of engaging in expressions of Whiteness that include arrogance and ignorance, you've stuck your foot in your mouth, and [prospective donors] know that.[21]

For African American archivists, the issue of race denoted a certain membership in the communities they sought to document and provided them with some advantage over their ethnic and White counterparts. Several among the African American archivists representing African American repositories inferred that through membership they were more readily accepted. Because of their affiliations, they were considered "part of the community, [rather than] outside agents coming in and poaching information."[22] Informant A22 observed that:

> Working in the community and being of the community and not above or outside the community, you develop relationships and trust with people, so that in some cases [donors] will bring things to you, rather than having to go seek them out.[23]

When White archivists discussed the significance of race, most immediately acknowledged their attendant disadvantages in gaining trust in local African American communities. Several prefaced their responses by stating, "I am not African American."[24] Some among this group also indicated that they felt compelled to make deliberate efforts to confront and overcome certain racial barriers created through their institutions' past histories and discriminatory practices that had alienated African Americans. The pursuit of one collection, for example, led an archivist to speak candidly with a prospective donor and "lay

out exactly the [racist] history of an institution, its past failures"[25] in not serving the African American community, and discuss steps the facility was undertaking to make amends in that regard. Doing so resulted in the successful acquisition of the collection, which subsequently formed the core of that facility's African American holdings. Another informant explained that the lengthy cultivation of ongoing friendships over a number of years also yielded some sizeable collections of African American materials from a community. Lacking the kind of community membership that race afforded African American archivists, White archivists revealed that earning the trust of African American donors was often a longer and more involved process than working with non-African American communities. Informant A21 described an approach to earning trust over an extended period as

> a matter of building personal relationships with one person at a time. Part of it is showing that you're sincerely interested, showing that you want to work with people, but you're not coming in to try and take control or dictate to them how to care for their material.[26]

Informant A20 articulated through a similar response that establishing a prior rapport with a local African American community also proved beneficial in earning trust for a particular documentation initiative. A White associate of the repository interacted with community members and established personal friendships through numerous community-sponsored social and cultural events. This associate subsequently played a key role when the repository conducted a successful oral history project in the community. Informants A20 and A21 indicated that both attempts to earn trust required commitments of time and involvement far and beyond what would have likely been necessary in a White community where the repository officials were affiliated or known in advance.

Along with the race of the archivists, the study found that racial identities of repositories and evidence of their commitments to documenting local African American communities also figured into efforts to build trust. The twelve African American repositories dated from the early 1900s up to the present century. Most of these entities had earned the community's trust over extended periods of time and through longstanding commitments to preserving African American history. Half had been in existence for more than thirty years, and three had been in existence for more than three-quarters of a century. Three of these facilities were established prior to the 1930s. Six came into existence during the Sixties and Seventies, emerging in tandem with the heightened Black social consciousness of the Civil Rights era and the sense of national inclusiveness associated with the Bicentennial celebration. Two others were established between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, and one was established in the 2000s. Documenting African American history was the primary objective of each of these facilities. Table 2 shows the ages and collecting histories of the African American repositories included in the study.

An average length of forty-two years characterized the ages and collecting histories of the twelve African American repositories. There was no surprise that some of the oldest facilities had the most extensive collecting histories and the largest collections, due to the length of time they had engaged in archival documentation. This fact highlighted the significance of race and racial pride among African American repositories and collectors who prized the African American historical record when many Whites ignored and/or denied its existence. Nine repositories had collected for at least the past thirty years and some spanned multiple periods of historical significance in the United States. The study suggested that the availability of staffing and financial resources also impacted documentation strategies

employed by these facilities. Staff sizes at all except one included at least four persons, although six repositories had only one employee specifically dedicated to the development of archival collections. Five repositories were funded through public and academic libraries with materials budgets ranging from slightly more than nine hundred thousand dollars to multi-million dollar levels. Here, the academic libraries were located at small and medium-sized baccalaureate colleges and universities, one of which was classified as research-intensive. The seven remaining facilities were funded through library systems with materials budgets ranging between thirty-nine thousand and three hundred thousand dollars. These repositories were situated at a small historical society, a museum, several research centers, and large and medium-sized educational institutions. The latter included a master's level institution, a research-extensive university, and another classified as research-intensive. Despite the range of the budgets at these the African American facilities, these repositories received only a percentage of such funds and most were impacted through financial shortages. Table 2 also illustrates the sizes of the collections held by each of the various repositories.

The seventeen majority-White repositories dated from the early Nineteenth century to the latter part of the Twentieth century. Eight were established within a seventy-year period that extended from the early-1820s to the early-1890s. Nine others came into existence during a ninety-year span, which began after 1904. Documenting African American history was not a primary objective for most of these entities, except within special departments or special collections established at some repositories. Where such materials were concerned, relatively brief collecting histories of sixteen years or less, characterized the efforts of nearly half of these facilities. Table 3 illustrates how long the majority-White repositories had

existed and collected overall. This table also shows collecting histories specific to African American holdings, calling attention to the time lapsed before such materials became a collection focus at these facilities. At two repositories, the collecting histories for African American materials coincided with the overall collecting histories for non-African American materials.

An average of nearly eighty-three years characterized the ages of the White repositories and their overall collecting histories. By contrast, the average length of collecting histories for African American materials spanned slightly less than twenty years at these facilities. The latter fact was reflected among the sizes of African American holdings, most of which were generally smaller than those held by African American repositories. This study found that issues of race and racism significantly impacted the evolution of collecting histories at White repositories and their successes in developing such collections. Informant A13 acknowledged, for example, that one early repository founder collected a wide range of materials because they were of some general interest in the wider history of a particular geographic region. These included, among other things, records from "slavery, Reconstruction, and the Freedmen's Bureau."[27] This informant doubted that the repository's founder "consciously thought these materials would [prove valuable to] help document the African American community."[28] Despite ignorance of their full intellectual significance, varying quantities of African Americana at times found their way into some White repositories, "long before they became a major collection focus."[29] Recognizing that these materials held important links to the African American and non-African American pasts sparked intentional collection efforts. Some informants reported that several initiatives took root in earnest subsequent to other specially funded grant projects, some of which were

likened unto pilot projects. Two collections came into existence because faculty members at academic institutions lent their participation and support thereto. Another had its genesis when one of the seventeen repositories recognized that documenting a particular African American community was a matter of professional responsibility. Here, informant A20 noted there was an "awareness that there was this very vibrant community that no one was paying attention to, no [repository] was reaching out to."[30] In another instance, a number of "local African American families contributed matching funds that enabled an academic institution to purchase a collection."[31] These materials then formed an essential core and attracted other related collections during the early stages of collection development. Most importantly,

> [t]he joint financial support made a lot of people aware of the collection, and it seemed as though the materials were going to be preserved. This was finally something [that] focused on African Americans at this institution, which does not traditionally have a very good reputation in the African American community.[32]

The seventeen White repositories had varying degrees of success in documenting local African American history. These entities were funded through libraries and library systems with materials budgets ranging from less than thirty thousand dollars up to the multi-million dollar level. Generally, these facilities had larger overall staffs than the African American repositories. Most, however, had only one archivist with primary responsibilities for collecting African American materials.

Six among the seventeen repositories held the largest and most well developed collections, each having sixty or more distinct collections. These facilities were funded through libraries with materials budgets ranging from slightly more than one and a half million dollars to multi-million dollar levels. They were located at research-extensive and

research-intensive educational institutions, a public library, and three large historical societies. African American archivists had sole responsibilities for developing the African American collections at two facilities. Two other informants attributed the size and success of their African American holdings, fully or in part, to African American archivists formerly employed by their facilities. The eleven remaining repositories were funded through libraries with materials budgets ranging from less than six thousand to slightly more than nine hundred thousand dollars. These facilities were located at research-extensive and research-intensive universities, a public library, and a mix of large and small historical societies. Like their counterparts at African American repositories, archivists at White repositories were also impacted by shortages in funding for the development of African American holdings.

5.3.3 Trust Building Strategies Employed by Archivists

The study identified a variety of different strategies that archivists employed to build trust in local African American communities. Similarities and differences existed among the approaches used by some male and female archivists within three main groups: African American and other ethnic archivists at African American repositories; African American and other ethnic archivists at majority-White repositories; and White archivists at majority-White repositories. Comparisons of the three groups along racial lines also revealed distinctions.

African American and Other Ethnic Archivists at African American Repositories

Responses from the five African American male archivists among this group shed light on two aspects of trust building strategies: (1) the reputation of repositories and (2) the reputation of the archivists. Most of these informants indicated that they benefited from their

affiliations with repositories held in the esteem of Black communities. Several represented facilities located at academic institutions with lengthy histories of service to the African American community. Informant A17 believed that the ability to earn trust was also "based upon the nature of a repository"[33] at a particular institution and its strategic geographic location and history of service to scholars. Besides services to researchers, these informants recognized the to need demonstrate an ability to care for materials. They forthrightly provided donors with assurances that materials would be used in accordance with stated purposes. Some provided these assurances through formal agreements with donors.

Non-archival-related services extended to the community from another academic institution over an extended period of time became a major factor in helping an African American male archivist gain trust. The use of educational facilities for meetings and social activities that involved the general public fostered extensive interactions with community residents. Members of the faculty and staff became deeply involved with the local community at a number of different levels as well, both on and off campus. Much mutual goodwill flowed from these kinds of associations and apparently contributed to the community's allegiance to the larger academic institution. Later, with the advent of the archival program, the repository at the institution earned the reputation as an "unofficial historical society for Blacks"[34] during a time when other repositories showed no interest in documenting the local African American community's history. This repository "acquired [African American] materials because people didn't have a place to put them but thought they were valuable"[35] enough to warrant preservation.

African American male archivists acknowledged that their personal reputations and the relationships they established in communities went a long way in helping them to gain

trust. Some earned such reputations through participation in community affairs and service on various committees. Others did so, in part, through media exposure as they were continually sought after for speaking engagements and the like. From time to time, personal relationships cultivated with some donors resulted in referrals to other prospective donors and helped archivists navigate communities across the archival landscape. One informant asserted that such relationships become all the more valuable when a repository includes "one or two people on the staff, or a point-person from the community [who] would have a certain amount of name recognition."[36] The obvious benefit is the prospect of earning trust in a more expeditious manner, no doubt.

Informant A29 provided one of the most insightful assessments on the forging of personal relationships to earn trust. This archivist utilized a strategy that involved research, through which he apprised himself of pertinent details about the lives and accomplishments of prospective donors. To convince them to consider depositing their materials, he emphasized the importance of their personal contributions to history. He also made donors aware of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the repository and utilized available opportunities to showcase selected items from the collections and demonstrate the viability of the repository and its mission. Beyond that, this informant developed a level of intimacy with the local community that enabled him to understand and appreciate the attachment that donors maintain with their papers. He observed that such a body of information represents

> … people's lives, …even though these are physical records, … papers as inanimate objects, … papers as pictures. However, these things have a soul. And the experiences that make up these physical materials are very meaningful. It almost borders on ancestral worship. It's kind of like, within the context of certain West African cultures, that even though this is a piece of wood, it's an inanimate object. But this god is only this physical statue; it's not what's being worshipped but the adoration is of the spirit that belongs to

> the inanimate object. So, [African Americans] are not worshipping the paper, but they're worshipping the experience and what it represents. Consequently, they have no problem [saying] 'Yeah, we'll throw it away. It's important but it's not that important. What's important is the experience. And if the only [person] that knows about it is me, well, fine.'[37]

The female archivists among this group included five African Americans and one from another ethnic group. They stated most frequently that the influence of friends groups, the support of advisory board members and key individuals in communities, and associations with other organizations facilitated in gaining trust. Some groups identified by these archivists had a diverse makeup, including African American scholars and educators with strong interests in preserving local history. Various advisory board members were influential in helping archivists identify relevant collections and establish contacts with prospective donors. They also held sway with donors, convincing them of the significance of donating materials to facilities and participating in documentation initiatives.

Like their male counterparts, these female archivists also acknowledged that their repositories' reputations and services were instrumental in gaining trust. Informants from two repositories in existence forty or more years cited their facilities' records of performance with regard to collecting and providing access to materials. Oftentimes, "what a [facility] offers becomes the selling point when talking to people who are a little reluctant about giving materials to a repository."[38] Processing materials in a timely manner and evidence of sustained institutional existence proved convincing for some donors, demonstrating a commitment to the documentation and preservation of history. Archivists among this group also recognized the significance of welcoming communities to frequent repositories on an ongoing basis.

Similar, again, to the African American male archivists, African American female informants indicated that their personal and professional reputations were significant in helping them gain trust. Informant A7, for example, was an actual native of a community and had cultivated relationships and solidified trust over the course of a lifetime. Her rapport with the community was such that she and her staff had "not asked a single person for their archives and not gotten them eventually."[39] Here, the referenced repository was also the kind of community institution in which donors and other community members felt vested through their financial backing and support.

African American female archivists considered gaining trust a matter best effectuated through "a one-on-one, face-to-face approach, rather than just sending out a cold letter"[40] to prospective donors. Informant A22 termed this strategy "the old fashioned shoe-leather approach … going out to various persons and organizations and talking with them and asking directly for their collections."[41] Doing so provided opportunities to cultivate personal relationships and become known in communities, whereas archivists might otherwise give the perception of merely seeking something from donors and offering little, or nothing, in return. The study found that some of the more successful documentation initiatives were launched when these archivists took the time to talk with African American donors about the value of archival materials and related preservation issues. Here, success was defined in terms of community reception and the interest generated on the part of donors. As the conversations progressed, archivists explored the possibilities of collaborating with prospective donors to preserve some aspect of community history. One such example was an oral history project described by informant A15. That initiative had a twofold purpose, in that it conveyed the

> staff's interest in sitting down and talking with the community's residents and to document some perspectives of history at a grassroots level where other types of primary source materials were nonexistent.[42]

Most importantly, however, the oral history project enabled the repository "to generate some confidence within the community and establish new relationships and it also provided entrée to other collections."[43]

African American and Other Ethnic Archivists at Majority White Repositories

This group of archivists included one African American male, four African American females, and one female from another ethnic group. They identified two main approaches to gaining trust in local African American communities. Included among these were (1) the use of outreach strategies and (2) the assistance received through African American members of advisory boards or other community networks. The study found essentially no distinctions among the approaches used by the male and female archivists in this group.

These informants mentioned educational outreach most frequently, noting that it helped them "build relationships with people so that [donors] would feel comfortable and safe in turning over their documents and photographs."[44] Some used this strategy to impart general information about repositories and collections, the care given to materials, and the need to acquire and preserve additional quantities of ethnic materials. Archivists extended some level of educational outreach through workshops, various speaking engagements, and the institutional assistance and support rendered for community-based documentation projects. These informants were affiliated with four repositories in existence more than a

hundred years and two in existence for less than fifty years. Their facilities had collecting histories ranging from two to thirty-five years for local African American materials.

Informant A24 observed that community members participating in workshops oftentimes gain a certain level of familiarity and befriend archivists to the extent that they may subsequently donate their own materials voluntarily or "make referrals to other donors and collections."[45] Educational workshops and seminars also earned high praise because they sometimes resulted in opportunities for repositories and communities to engage in partnerships and document particular aspects of local history. The study found that the formation of these partnerships between White repositories and African American communities requires careful planning and execution. Archivists needed to take appropriate steps to articulate the terms of such projects and ensure that the anticipated benefits were mutual for all parties, because

> you just don't go to Black communities and say I would like to collect your history and bring it here to an institution that [African Americans] see as a White institution.[46]

Responses from this group of archivists suggested that taking the initiative to go into African American communities to extend outreach amounts to a gesture of tremendous respect towards donors.

> The most important thing, in terms of gaining trust is that you ask to see everyone in their church, in their home, at their business. You're not asking them to come here, [to the repository].

Familiar settings like those mentioned above provide comfortable environments within which African Americans may air their concerns without feeling unduly pressured to honor donation requests from White facilities.

With its composition of mostly African American females, this group of archivists was very similar to African American female archivists at African American repositories. They reported that the assistance of advisory board members was especially beneficial in gaining trust in African American communities. All except one had been at their current places of employment for fewer than five years. In addition to being relative newcomers at their repositories, three were also recent arrivals in the communities where these facilities were located. The informants indicated that members of advisory boards and persons involved in other types of networks were well known through their affiliations with individuals, organizations, and institutions in communities and served as advocates for documentation initiatives. One archivist, who was new to a particular geographic area and had not yet established connections within the African American community, found that advisory board members "served as the memory of the community."[47] In doing so, advisory board members provided clues to important historical events as well as the identities of prospective donors and important caches of materials.

The study found that African American and other ethnic archivists at majority-White repositories appeared to face a more arduous task in gaining trust than archivists at African American repositories. This was observed in relation to several factors. Most of the African American archivists at African American repositories had served longer in their current positions. They benefited from having longer periods of time to gain trust in their constituent local communities. In addition, they had longer periods over which to develop larger

collections than were generally held by White repositories. Finally, they were not perceived as collecting or seizing African Americana and placing it under the control of non-African American institutions.

The challenge was often greater for African American and other ethnic archivists at White repositories because of the nature of these institutions. Particular circumstances surrounded some of these facilities, especially those having histories of tainted relations with African American communities, due to racial tensions. Such was exemplified by a facility, which in its early history did not "welcome African Americans."[48] A sentiment prevailed in connection with this repository whereby, "unless you were someone's domestic, you didn't walk in that part of the city. You had no business being there if you were Black."[49] Knowledge of this repository's blemished past necessitated that the archivist expend considerable effort attempting to convince African Americans to even consider the facility as a worthy custodian for their history. Doing so entailed inviting various community members to become partners and volunteer their time with special African American projects, in order to gain insights regarding the facility's commitment to preserving local African American history.

For a number of reasons, as some archivists noted, African American communities often respond with heightened suspicions when White repositories express an interest in collecting their materials.

> Part of the mistrust is that people who are non-Black go into the community [in unofficial capacities]. They're collecting on their own and selling things on the market. There is [also] suspicion about news reporters trying to dig up negative stories about [African Americans].[50]

Sometimes, suspicions are further aroused when interests shift toward the acquisition of certain types of personal records such as letters and diaries belonging to individuals. Making the contents of such records available for public consumption may constitute some degree of risk under the best of circumstances. In the absence of trust, however, African American donors may feel that the risk further magnifies when a non-African American institution takes the step to make such materials accessible for scholarly pursuits. The suspicions identified by the informants seemed directed mainly towards repositories, rather than the African American archivists acting on their behalf. Several informants implied, however, that African American community members held them to a high standard of accountability and professional integrity, nonetheless. Informant A12 emphasized that, as an African American archivist,

> You've got to know your community. You've got to know the general history– national and local, because that's a powerful tool to convince people you know what you're doing.[51]

More importantly under such circumstances, "being seen as extensions of the ethnic community who just happen to work at mainstream institutions"[52] becomes critical for African American archivists attempting to gain donors' trust. Those participating in this investigation might best be described as archivists/mediators because their duties seemed partly aimed at reconciling the distrust between majority-White repositories and targeted African American communities.

Whereas the racial identity of repositories was a mitigating factor in these archivists attempts to gain trust, one African American female also reported that her gender became a factor during an initial visit to a prospective male donor's home. The donor took the

necessary steps to host the meeting in public view. Following this course of action enabled him to protect his personal reputation while assessing the professional intent of the archivist and the facility she represented.

White Archivists at Majority-White Repositories

This group of informants included five males and six females, and all essentially began their quests from the same detriment. During initial attempts to traverse African American historical terrain, they discovered that these communities were conditioned to respond to them with a certain level of distrust. Trust building strategies identified by these informants mirrored those used by their African American and other ethnic colleagues at African American and White repositories. They also indicated that the strategies they employed were essentially the same as those used to gain the trust of donors in White and other ethnic communities. The study found where African American communities were concerned, these archivists, of course, relied heavily upon: (1) the cooperation and assistance of African Americans serving on their advisory boards and (2) the personal relationships they cultivated with African American civic leaders and other influential community members.

Through their participation, advisory board members provided input on collection development matters as deemed appropriate. Archivists sometimes involved them in specific projects as well, including documentation initiatives that actually entailed collecting materials. The use of this strategy created visibility for the board members and highlighted their affiliations with archival facilities. More importantly, having their support during efforts to document local African American history became for the repositories "sort of a seal of approval from people who are respected and accomplished"[53] in the community. Independent

of their involvement with special projects, board members also steered relevant materials towards various repositories. The desired outcome for archivists was the hope that their board members' acceptances of documentation initiatives would serve as factors to encourage groups and individuals in various communities to do likewise.

Informant A1 noted that the mere inclusion of African Americans on the advisory board at one facility served as "great outreach to the community."[54] This was intended to demonstrate a level of sincerity towards working with communities and documenting their history. Several informants stressed that making known the intent to work with communities far outweighs the converse, whereby White archivists and their repositories might otherwise give the perception of usurping complete control of African American documentation initiatives.

The study found that cultivating personal relationships in African American communities was a painstaking process for some White archivists, and rightly so. Informants indicated that they must take into consideration the impressions they make during their initial approach. It is advisable, therefore, to

> talk and let perspective donors have a chance to feel comfortable with you, [rather than] go in very aggressively [advocating] Give us your records. We want your papers.[55]

Archivists cited this aspect of trust building particularly for its applicability in communities where "older African Americans remember segregation"[56] and hold lingering resentments and distrust towards cultural institutions known for their past discriminatory practices. This explains in part why for White archivists "working with the African American community

[requires] more building of trust"[57] than is required for working with non-African American communities.

Female informants among this group recognized that engaging in partnerships also fostered valuable personal contacts between archivists and community members. A number of such partnerships featured oral history projects that facilitated in the building of trust over extended periods. Archivists felt that their commitments to these kinds of projects demonstrated that they thought people's "lives and history are important."[58] Some initiatives led to the donation of other kinds of materials besides oral histories. More importantly, one informant contended that such projects "allowed people to tell their own stories, [rather than] imposing the European view whereby archivists tried telling [people's] history for them."[59] Female informants implied that collecting oral histories enhances trust building because the community members become major stakeholders in such projects. They also recognized that community members know they can exert significant influence upon the content and quality of the resulting end product, based upon their willingness to provide the kinds of life story accounts sought after by archivists.

Conversations with White archivists at majority White repositories revealed that they faced the greatest challenges of all the study informants attempting to gain trust in local African American communities. Doing so proved challenging for several reasons, the most obvious being that they were not members of the African American community. Working mainly through a select number of board members and other key individuals meant these archivists did not have the widest possible direct access to the community in its entirety. Informant A1 noted in that regard:

> The people we have been able to reach the community through are a smaller group than the other areas of local history. [With] the documentation for the African American community, we haven't reached nearly as many to get into the community and find documentation as we have in some other areas.[60]

The majority of White informants also reported that they had primary responsibilities for the overall collecting at their repositories, and documenting African American history was not the sole collecting focus at any of the institutions represented by these archivists. In some instances, the documentation of the local African American community "basically fits in where [facilities were] documenting local communities in general,"[61] or as special projects of some fixed duration. Limited time and staff resources, therefore, precluded these archivists from making a more sustained effort to document African American history and gave them fewer opportunities to gain trust more widely in African American communities. The study suggested that this resulted in the acquisition of smaller numbers of such collections at seven repositories, thus, giving African American repositories a considerable collecting advantage.

Certainly, various special projects and other more generalized initiatives at White repositories contribute to the documentation of local African American history. Such approaches raise certain questions, however, concerning the degree to which some collections may, or may not, render the fullest possible historical accountings. This study takes the position that documenting any local community, regardless of its ethnic identity, should result in materials sufficient to produce a subset of a larger history as well as an independent set that provides entrée to the past. In doing so, White repositories should strive to collect the same kinds of materials that African American repositories would acquire to document local African American history.

5.3.4 Summary

Gaining trust is of high priority in documenting the history of local African American communities. Convincing donors to give over custody of relevant materials requires an archivist to utilize a variety of strategies commonly recognized for their effectiveness throughout the archival profession. Included among these are the reputations of archivists and their repositories, the rapport archivists establish with community members, and the support received from advisory board members and other influential persons. Where African American communities are concerned, the racial identities of archivists and their affiliated repositories matter considerably. It comes as no surprise that African American repositories have demonstrated the most longstanding commitment to documenting local Black communities. Because of that, African American and other ethnic archivists at African American repositories have an advantage over their counterparts at majority White facilities and have succeeded in developing larger holdings. The study shows that African American and other ethnic archivists at majority White repositories face a greater challenge in gaining trust on behalf of their respective repositories. Meanwhile, White archivists faced the greatest challenges of all in that regard.

5.4 Aspects of History Documented by Archivists and Their Repositories

5.4.1 Introduction

Collectively, the African American and majority White repositories represented in the study have documented a variety of different aspects of history pertaining to local African American communities across the United States. The informants provided responses concerning how existing repository mission statements and policy provisions, or the lack

thereof, influenced the development of such collections. Archivists also provided responses describing the various collections developed by their repositories.

5.4.2 The Influence of Repository Collecting Missions

As expected, the missions of African American facilities generally focused strictly upon the documentation of African American history. One among these entities stood out for its inclusion of materials pertaining to other ethnic groups in the United States. Meanwhile, African American archivists affiliated with special African American collections at majority White repositories also focused mainly upon documenting African American history as well. One White archivist at a majority White facility abided by an institutional mission to document a particular aspect of the history of a local African American community. Otherwise, White repositories, like those of African American identity, focused mainly upon the documentation of Eurocentric history.

A total of eight informants reported that their repositories had developed formal institutional mission statements for the purpose of documenting the history of local African American communities. This number included six archivists from repositories of African American identity and two from majority White repositories. These informants described missions that emphasized the documentation of particular cities, counties, or regions. One facility provided for documentation at national and international levels as well. In some instances, the mission to document a local community was included within the mission statement pertaining to the documentation of larger areas beyond local boundaries.

Other archivists participating in the study acknowledged that their respective repositories operated with far broader mission statements, which did not formally provide for the documentation of local African American communities. Yet, these facilities included

such materials among their holdings. A number of African American facilities sought to document history pertaining to particular centuries or on national and global scales. In other instances, African American archivists at both African American and majority White facilities indicated that their missions focused upon African Americana in designated geographic areas comprised of one or more states.

Most White archivists at repositories with broad collecting missions followed suit with their African American counterparts, directing their attention towards particular states or groups of states. The collecting mission at one of these entities included a national focus as well. Archivists at White repositories generally made no specific mention of local African Americana whatsoever. Rather, they implied that their mission statements informally extended to these materials. Several noted that their facilities aimed "to document, collect, educate, and exhibit all aspects of"[62] the history of a particular region or state, presumably including the diversity of ethnic perspectives represented therein.

In the absence of formal mission statements, African American and majority White repositories sought to acquire relevant materials through several means. Some did so through indirect documentation efforts, whereas the focus on larger designated geographic regions automatically included local African American communities with relevant materials. These repositories also pursued such materials through various targeted documentation initiatives, and sometimes in direct response to news and announcements concerning the existence and availability of papers pertaining to previously undocumented groups and individuals.

5.4.3 The Influence of Repository Collecting Policies

Nine archivists represented repositories with formal collecting policies pertaining to the documentation of local African American communities. This number included five

archivists from facilities of African American identity and four from majority White repositories. Two of the informants from African American repositories, and three from the majority White repositories reported that their policies specified the inclusion of materials subscribing to particular formats and subject areas. Four others followed less restrictive policies, some of which mirrored the broad mission statements described earlier in this section. One such policy provided for "documenting all aspects of the [African American] community"[63] across a multi-state region. Another stipulated that a repository should "collect all the evidence that will help to document the history of African Americans"[64] in a smaller geographic area within a state.

The study found that thirteen majority White repositories and six African American repositories had no formal policy provisions whatsoever pertaining to the documentation of local African American communities. Individual archivists at some of these facilities made decisions regarding the collection of materials they deemed relevant. Several informants noted that their repositories had developed substantial collections of local African American holdings, despite the lack of a policy. In some instances the documentation had not been concentrated or consistent, however, leading one informant to acknowledge the presence of gaps in a noted collection of local and national research significance.

5.4.4 Documentation and a Model for Success

This study identified four distinguishable groups among the twenty-nine repositories. They were based upon combinations of the formal and informal collecting missions and the formal and informal collecting policies that existed at various facilities. Table 7 describes the various groups according to their particular mission and policy compositions.

Table 7. Repositories As Collection Development Groups

GROUP	MISSION	POLICY
1	*formal*	*formal*
2	*formal*	*informal*
3	*informal*	*formal*
4	*informal*	*informal*

Groups one through three were, respectively, comprised of seventeen, ten, and nearly fourteen percent of all facilities represented in the study. The fourth included nearly fifty-nine percent of the repositories. Having formal missions and policies prioritizes the documentation and preservation of local African American history. However, the study found that the existence of these components did not equate successful documentation of local African American communities. Factors such as the reputation of repositories and the service of archivists were more critical in that regard.

Repositories had built their reputations over the course of their institutional lifetime. Some had long demonstrated an interest in documenting local African American history and had consequently earned their place as important community institutions. The study suggested that support through repository administration was another critical factor for documentation success. In one such instance, an influx of management decisions shifted "interest and support away from the archives [at repository R-18]."[65] This hampered collecting for several years, including the acquisition of locally based materials. Administrative decisions pertaining to the availability and allocation of resources impacted success at most facilities. The majority of these entities acquired local African American materials through wider state and regional collecting foci. Yet, having a broader collecting

scope did not diminish the significance of acquiring local African Americana or minimize its inclusion among some collections. As informant A5 noted, documenting local communities "is just part of the larger collecting scope"[66] at repositories. Five of the twenty-nine repositories had collecting foci specifically aimed at local African American materials.

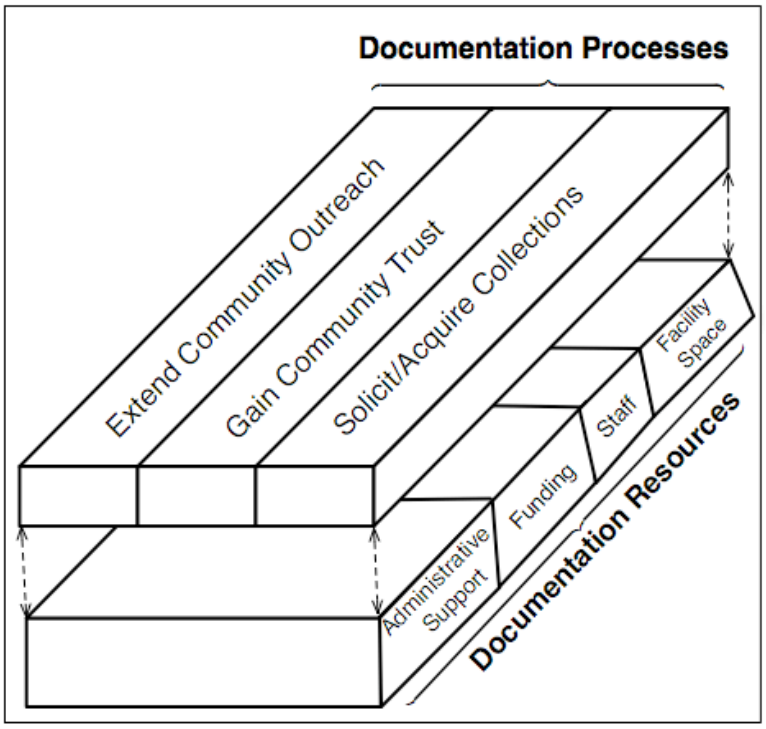
Where the archivists were concerned in documentation success, they enhanced the effectiveness of their service through the length of their tenure at facilities. Eight informants at African American repositories had held their current positions for periods ranging from ten to thirty-four years. Seven among these eight had worked at single repositories for all, or nearly all, of their professional careers. Informants at two small-sized African American repositories were hired for their positions when their facilities commenced operations, and they continued to play key roles in all aspects of developing local African American collections. Meanwhile, seven informants from White facilities had served in their current positions for periods ranging from thirteen to twenty-nine years. Some among this number went to considerable lengths to reach out to the local African American community in attempts to foster favorable relationships, whereas essentially none had existed previously.

The study suggested that archivists, through their tenure, had really come to know and appreciate the local history of the communities they served. An African American female whose tenure spanned less than two years was affiliated with a White repository that had the largest African American holdings of any of the twenty-nine facilities. This informant had also resided in the community for almost thirty years. In some instances her repository strived to acquire local materials when and wherever they became available, even though their importance was not fully known, rather than risk the loss of potential treasures that could never be replaced. Being a community native and/or having uninterrupted periods of

service at repositories afforded better opportunities for archivists to know and become known to community members. Most importantly, they had opportunities to learn the complexities of community history and devise strategies appropriate for its documentation.

As depicted in Figure 1, this research identified a two-tiered model, which facilitates the successful documentation of local African American communities.

Figure 2. A Documentation Model for Success



The lower tier serves as a base for the model and includes resources essential for the support of documentation initiatives such as those described by participating archivists. Among these resources are administrative support received from repositories; funding; archival staff; and facility space for housing and making collections accessible. The importance of administrative support cannot be overstated. Here, internal as well as external decision-

making of various sorts may impact the existence and availability of other resources represented in the lower tier. Funding resources also take on particular significance, especially as a determinant of staffing levels and space at repositories. Meanwhile, three critical elements: extending community outreach, gaining community trust, and the solicitation and acquisition of materials comprise the upper tier. These define the documentation process itself and share the resources comprising the lower tier. Together, these tiers provide a foundation for the successful development of local African American collections at archives and museums.

5.4.5 Local African American Collections Developed by Repositories

Informants A4, A5, A6, A7, A15, A17, A23, A28, A29, A11, A12, A21, A25, A26, and A27 revealed that their repositories had acquired significant quantities of local African American materials. Most of these archivists did not specify the actual number of such collections held by their repositories and examinations of many repository websites, finding aids, and online catalog records proved inconclusive in that regard. Meanwhile, informants A4, A23, A29, and A21 had specific missions in that regard. Some of the most commonly documented subject areas identified by the informants included: "the arts, entertainment, sports, law, medicine, education, fraternities and sororities, religion, politics, business, industry, social activism, the Civil Rights Movement, community service organizations, and numerous occupations and professions."[67] Many of these subject areas were represented in the holdings at both African American and White repositories. An informant clarified the documentation interest of White repositories thusly: "it is, as much as anything, a matter of you can't document [local community] history without addressing the African American experience."[68] Similarly, forty-two percent of the informants from African American

repositories reported that their facilities also held small quantities of materials from White individuals, groups, and organizations, which documented aspects of African American history. Most of the majority White repositories included African American holdings as a part of their general subject collections; more than half a dozen had developed well-publicized special collections, some of which had impressive numbers of distinct collections.

In addition to traditional archival resources, oral histories were a component of existing collections at African American and majority White repositories. Fifty-eight percent of African American facilities and forty-seven percent of majority White facilities held such materials. Two informants estimated that oral histories constituted a third of the African American holdings at the one of the latter repositories and the bulk of these materials at another. The study found that, in some instances, African Americans seemed more willing to share details of their history and culture through oral history projects, rather than initially surrendering physical traces. Gathering oral histories in relation to pilot projects also afforded repositories an opportunity to demonstrate interest and sincerity and establish trust before launching other larger initiatives. In addition, such materials were probably more expeditiously and economically obtainable than other types of primary sources.

There was no surprise that documentation initiatives at most facilities seemed to follow traditional collecting patterns, concentrating mainly upon notable and influential personalities. Several informants from African American repositories also reported the outcome of successful projects that transcended class barriers and resulted in the documentation of lesser known groups and individuals.

5.4.6 Summary

Most of the twenty-nine repositories had no formal missions or policies for documenting local African American communities. Among the entities where missions and policies existed, African American facilities outnumbered majority White facilities. Some repositories' missions focused upon specific cities or counties and others included such localities within the scope of larger targeted geographical areas comprised of one or several states. Meanwhile, collecting policies at African American and majority White repositories provided for the acquisition of materials subscribing to a number of different formats and representing a variety of subject areas. The study informants indicated that both groups of repositories have accumulated some significant local African American holdings, including a number of oral histories. Most archivists did not provide information pertaining to precise numbers of local African American collections held by their respective repositories.

5.5 Challenges to Documentation Initiatives

5.5.1 Introduction

Several limitations confronted archivists in their efforts to document the history of local African American communities. Chief among these were limited resources in terms of funding, staff, and adequate space to store collections. Archivists were also beset by competition for African American primary source materials, as well as a lack of existing materials in some communities, and several other challenges mentioned with a more limited frequency.

5.5.2 Limited Staffing Resources

Eighty-six percent of the archivists participating in the study identified the lack of staffing resources as a challenge to their efforts to document the history of local African American communities. This, combined with the magnitude of archivists' normal workloads, created certain obstacles for collecting initiatives. Archivists at one-person shops, in particular, noted the impact that limited staffing resources had upon their efforts. Considerable human input is required for soliciting collections and arranging and describing materials expeditiously, and informants at large and small institutions alike reported deficiencies in the time available to devote to these tasks. The acquisition of collections was hampered because some archivists simply did not have time to establish contacts with prospective donors or follow-up with leads to relevant materials. Two archivists reported that their facilities had amassed backlogs of unprocessed collections as high as "forty-five"[69] to "sixty percent"[70] of their total African American holdings. One of these informants conjectured that the volume of such backlogged collections was such that some materials might never be processed in the foreseeable future. Several other archivists from African American repositories in particular indicated that because of staffing limitations their facilities had purposely scaled back collection development activities in an attempt to reduce current backlogs of unprocessed collections.

Concerns about limited staff resources were articulated with the highest frequency among the group comprised of African American and other ethnic archivists from both African American and majority White repositories. This group included more than ninety-one percent of the African American and other ethnic archivists from facilities of African American identity and one hundred percent of the African American and other ethnic

archivists at majority White repositories. Approximately eighty-two percent of White archivists at majority White repositories also expressed concerns about limited staff resources and the related encumbrance this created in developing African American holdings.

Staffing issues seemed most critical among African American archivists because the majority of these informants had miniscule staffs to begin with and/or they were solely responsible for developing African American collections at their facilities. The lack of staff had a direct effect upon their capabilities to fully carry out their institutional missions regarding the documentation of African American communities. In addition, both African American and White archivists noted that African American archivists are generally not plentiful across the archival profession. Some White archivists stated that this fact contributed to the staff shortages at their repositories.

5.5.3 Limited Funding Resources

Nearly forty-five percent of the study informants reported that inadequate funding challenged their efforts to document the history of local African American communities. African American archivists at African American repositories identified this challenge with the greatest frequency, followed by African American archivists at majority White repositories, and then White archivists at majority White repositories. Limited finances contributed to staffing shortages at some facilities, fueled the competition for collections at others, affected the degree to which repositories acquired additional space for storing collections, and impacted the daily operations of some facilities.

African American archivists specifically felt that their facilities were often disadvantaged when collections became available for acquisition through purchases because they were less able to "compete with [majority White facilities] with deep pockets."[71] Some

of these informants believed that the lack of funding increased the likelihood that a number of important high-profile local collections might never come into the custody of African American repositories. Also, some African American archivists anticipated the need to incorporate special budgets into their plans for future operations, considering that some African American donors are leaning more towards the trend of selling, rather than donating, their papers. Additionally, the lack of funding influenced one among the African American archivists to resort to the use of personal monies to purchase basic supplies for the routine operations of a facility.

Overall, White archivists indicated a preference for acquiring African American materials through donations. Several among these informants reported, however, that their repositories had at various times purchased selected items or collections pertaining to high-profile African Americans as well as non- African Americans. While the study suggested that White archivists generally had more resources than their African American counterparts, most indicated that money was not overly abundant at their facilities. These informants generally discussed funding limitations with respect to the need for additional staff and other issues, rather than for purchasing collections.

Whereas the lack of funding affected most facilities, this is an issue that repositories could possibly pursue collaboratively through grants aimed at joint documentation initiatives. Such funds could possibly be shared for joint workshops and other programs as well, particularly where local communities benefit from extending outreach.

5.5.4 Limited Space Resources

As reported by approximately thirty-eight percent of the study informants, maintaining ample storage space for collections was a matter of concern for archivists at

African American and majority White repositories alike. A number of repositories had reached, or nearly exhausted their maximum storage capacities. Because of that, informants at two facilities stated that they were not actively collecting materials. Two others had taken steps to curtail the number of new acquisitions, and one of these two reported that, out of necessity, "some [archival] materials were actually turned away and artifacts were sometimes returned to donors because of a lack of space to house them."[72]

Without appropriate funding, the desired remedy of acquiring additional space remained beyond reach for many facilities. Most archivists had long come to the realization that the size of their facilities imposed certain restrictions on the volume of their holdings. As an alternative, informant A27 advocated the implementation of programs to train African American "communities to document their own history."[73] This idea could possibly extend to repositories working in collaboration with one another as well. Some facilities could, for example, consider space-sharing and exercising joint ownership for collections in situations where one repository might not have adequate space to house an important local collection.

5.5.6 Competition for Primary Sources

The study found that competition for materials documenting local African American communities exists at two levels. There is competition among African American repositories and between African American and majority White repositories collecting in the same subject areas. Fifty percent of African American informants, compared to eighteen percent of White informants, indicated that these levels of competition posed limitations upon their efforts.

African American archivists cited most frequently the competition they faced from majority White repositories, with respect to purchasing collections. These informants

believed that prestige and financial resources provided White facilities with certain advantages over African American repositories. Informant A2 felt that the competition for materials heightens when African American and majority White repositories focus on a particular local community that "has not been actively pursued or previously documented, and attempt to fill gaps"[74] in collections. In some such instances, White repositories often become the beneficiaries when African American donors elect to sell their papers. This study did not suggest, however, that the purchase of collections was widespread among repositories. Nor, did funding exist in great abundance specifically for that purpose. Approximately thirty-eight percent of African American informants, and thirty-six percent of White informants, indicated that their facilities sometimes acquired between one and two percent, or less, of their African American holdings through purchases. All informants unanimously indicated a preference for acquisitions through donations.

Competition also proved challenging at times for all archivists in geographic areas where other repositories had previously launched successful ongoing collecting initiatives. This was noted especially among repositories with relatively brief collecting histories pertaining to African Americana. Recognizing that competition of this type affects the strength of collections and relations between various repositories, several informants utilized precautionary measures in that regard. These included (1) the refusal to solicit materials deemed better suited to collections at other repositories, (2) developing formal mission statements to designate geographic boundaries and subject areas of repositories, and (3) cooperation among archival facilities.

5.5.7 Shortages of Materials

Slightly more than seventeen percent of all informants identified the lack of collectible materials as a challenge in documenting local African American communities. Some archivists reported that relevant materials "had been lost, destroyed, or prospective donors were reluctant to turn them over"[75] to repositories. According to informant A-21, "certain organizations and Black churches"[76] had apparently not fared well in terms of maintaining the records that documented their history. This informant further observed that the lack of church and organizational records "was not peculiar to the Black community, but seemed more pronounced there."[77]

Another informant discussed the challenge encountered due to a scarcity of records in relation to the size of a community's small African American population. Here, the archivist implied that the African American community, more or less, lacked visibility with respect to its history and achievements. Attempts at "uncovering African American groups within that community"[78] and identifying relevant materials proved difficult and yielded a limited cache.

5.5.8 Other Documentation Challenges

Slightly less than seven percent of the informants identified one other challenge that mainly concerned documentation initiatives carried out by majority White repositories. African American and White archivists alike noted that the past histories of some of these facilities and their affiliations with African American communities mattered a great deal. Not uncommonly, donors expressed reservations about entrusting their materials to "a White institution that doesn't have a great reputation in the African American community"[79] because of race relations. Beyond sentiments of this nature, the informants observed that prospective donors often concerned themselves with the politics concerning the custody of

materials. For some, there was "the tension between placing their records at a mainstream repository that does not strictly deal with the African American community."[80]

5.5.9 Summary

Inadequate funding lay at the heart of most challenges that archivists faced in documenting local African American communities. The lack of monetary resources figured most prominently into the efforts of African American archivists. Some repositories lacked the necessary funding to hire additional staff and acquire much-needed space for growing collections. African American facilities were more disadvantaged when collections became available through sales. Competition also existed between repositories beyond the issue of money, in instances where facilities collected in accordance with similar themes and subject areas. Other challenges stemmed from a lack of materials in some communities and prospective donors' reluctance to give up custody of their materials.

ENDNOTES

[1] Personal Interview Number 7, November 7, 2006.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Personnel Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006.

[4] Personal Interview Number 27, February 8, 2007.

[5] Personal Interview Number 13, November 15, 2006.

[6] Personal Interview Number 2, November 2, 2006.

[7] Personal Interview Number 18, November 30, 2006.

[8] Personal Interview Number 9, November 9, 2006.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Personal Interview Number 7, November 7, 2006.

[11] Personal Interview Number 26, January 30, 2007.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Personnel Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006.

[14] Personal Interview Number 25, January 30, 2007.

[15] Personal Interview Number 29, October 18, 2006.

[16] Personal Interview Number 17, November 29, 2006.

[17] Personal Interview Number 26, January 30, 2007.

[18] Personal Interview Number 5, November 3, 2006.

[19] Personal Interview Number 15, November 20, 2006.

[20] Personal Interview Number 12, November 13, 2006.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Personal Interview Number 22, December 11, 2006.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Personal Interview Number 11, November 10, 2006; Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[25] Personal Interview Number 26, January 30, 2007.

[26] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[27] Personal Interview Number 13, November 15, 2006.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[30] Personal Interview Number 20, December 8, 2006.

[31] Personal Interview Number 2, November 2, 2006.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Personal Interview Number 17, November 29, 2006.

[34] Personal Interview Number 6, November 7, 2006.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Personal Interview Number 4, November 3, 2006.

[37] Personal Interview Number 29, October 18, 2006.

[38] Personal Interview Number 5, November 3, 2006.

[39] Personal Interview Number 7, November 7, 2006.

[40] Personal Interview Number 22, December 11, 2006.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Personal Interview Number 15, November 20, 2006.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Personal Interview Number 25, January 30, 2007.

[45] Personal Interview Number 24, December 13, 2006.

[46] Personal Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006.

[47] Personal Interview Number 3, November 2, 2006.

[48] Personal Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Personal Interview Number 12, November 13, 2006.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Personal Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006.

[53] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[54] Personal Interview Number 1, November 1, 2006.

[55] Personal Interview Number 13, November 15, 2006.

[56] Ibid; Personal Interview Number 26, January 30, 2007.

[57] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[58] Personal Interview Number 9, November 9, 2006.

[59] Personal Interview Number 20, December 8, 2006.

[60] Personal Interview Number 1, November 1, 2006.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Personal Interview Number 12, November 13, 2006.

[64] Personal Interview Number 28, February 12, 2007.

[65] Personal Interview Number 18, November 30, 2006.

[66] Personal Interview Number 5, November 3, 2006.

[67] Personal Interview Number 7, November 7, 2006; Personal Interview Number 6, November 7, 2006; Personal Interview Number 15, November 20, 2006; Personal Interview Number 23, December 13, 2006; Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006; Personal Interview Number 27, February 8, 2007.

[68] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[69] Personal Interview Number 25, January 30, 2007.

[70] Personal Interview Number 18, November 30, 2006.

[71] Personal Interview Number 5, November 3, 2006; Personal Interview Number 15, November 20, 2006; Personal Interview Number 19, December 6, 2006; Personal Interview Number 2, November 2, 2006; Personal Interview Number 6, November 7, 2006; Personal Interview Number 18, November 30, 2006.

[72] Personal Interview Number 23, December 13, 2006.

[73] Personal Interview Number 27, February 8, 2007.

[74] Personal Interview Number 2, November 2, 2006.

[75] Personal Interview Number 25, January 30, 2007.

[76] Personal Interview Number 21, December 11, 2006.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Personal Interview Number 3, November 2, 2006.

[79] Personal Interview Number 2, November 2, 2006.

[80] Personal Interview Number 11, November 10, 2006.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project explored strategies and practices used to document the history of African American communities. This investigation focused specifically upon the question, "How do African American and non-African American archivists document local African American communities, and what model should they use to develop an adequate collection documenting these communities?" An answer to this question was sought through an investigation of the following sub-questions, which serve as a guide for this section:

(1) What approaches do African American and White repositories use to document local African American communities? Which approaches are used most often for collecting materials?

(2) How do African American and White repositories document local African American communities similarly? What are the differences among the ways these repositories document local African American communities?

(3) What factors influence how African American and non-African American archivists document local African American communities?

(4) What materials are needed to document local African American communities?

(5) What aspects of the history and culture of local African American communities are repositories documenting most extensively?

(6) What model would ensure an adequate collection for documenting local African American communities?

(7) How do the efforts of African American and White repositories impact the documentation of African American communities at the local level?

6.2 Documentation Approaches Used by Repositories

Archivists used three main groups of strategies to document local African American communities. These included strategies for extending outreach, gaining donors' trust, and the solicitation and acquisition of materials relevant to subject areas that corresponded with the collecting missions and policies of archival repositories. Utilizing these strategies enable archivists to establish initial contacts and cultivate important relationships with donors.

6.2.1 Community Outreach Strategies

Archivists utilized a combination of educational outreach, programs and services, and publicity through various media to extend outreach to local African American communities. Sixty-two percent of the informants overall reported using educational outreach strategies. They provided information concerning their repositories as well as the significance of preserving African American archival materials. Archivists at White repositories used this strategy more extensively than those at African American repositories included in the study. They former facilities generally had briefer collecting histories for developing local African American collections. The average length of such collecting histories at White repositories

was approximately half the length of those at African American repositories. In addition, most informants representing White repositories had spent less than five years attempting to document the history of local African American communities. The study suggested that using this strategy was more critical for helping them establish contact, identify potential donors, and generate interest in communities. Archivists at most of the African American repositories, on the other hand, had spent ten years or longer documenting local African American communities. The majority of these informants had already succeeded in establishing contacts in local communities. Nearly forty-two percent reported that their facilities were not actively collecting new materials, however, so extending educational outreach had a lower priority for the time being. Both African American and White informants at White facilities, especially those with the larger collections, reported that educational outreach was an effective tool.

Nearly eighty-three percent of archivists overall utilized programs and services to extend outreach to local African American communities. Similar to using educational outreach, informants at White repositories reported more extensive use of this strategy than archivists at African American repositories. Some facilities sponsored programs in recognition of donors and collections. Archivists also supported, attended, and/or participated in programs sponsored by community groups. The latter were of particular benefit for White archivists in their quests for acceptance in communities. In addition, some repositories extended outreach through workshops conducted for the benefit of local churches and other community groups. Archivists from both African American and White facilities indicated that extending outreach through programs and services was the most effective of all such

strategies. This approach provided opportunities to further extend educational outreach and resulted in the successful acquisition of some substantial collections as well.

Thirty-four percent of archivists utilized media such as newspapers and other kinds of repository-generated materials to extend outreach. Through these sources they provided information about repositories and existing collections and publicized their interests in documenting and preserving African American history. A lack of financial resources was cited as a reason for not using this strategy more widely.

6.2.2 Trust Building Strategies

The study suggested that gaining trust is the most important step in documenting the history of local African American communities but archivists identified no novel approaches for doing so. Race, however, was the most critical factor in their efforts. This issue afforded African American archivists an advantage over their White counterparts.

Several factors impacted the efforts of African American and other ethnic archivists in gaining trust at African American repositories. Males and females alike relied upon their repositories' reputations and long-standing commitments to documenting and preserving African American history. The professional reputations of these archivists also facilitated in their efforts. Females among this group were distinguishable, acknowledging foremost that they benefited from the influence of friends groups, the support of advisory board members and key individuals in communities, and associations with other organizations. This suggested that some African American donors, perhaps, responded differently to the efforts of male and female archivists seeking to gain their trust. Males among this group made no mention of assistance received from friends groups and advisory boards. Three among this number had sole responsibility for the development of local African American collections at

their facilities. Two of these three also remained the sole archivists employed throughout the history of two small-sized repositories, a fact that was known in the communities they served. This suggested that they had commanded a level of trust and respect to the extent that they, perhaps, did not need third-party influence to win over prospective donors.

African American and other ethnic archivists at majority White repositories relied primarily upon outreach strategies. These male and female archivists were in a unique position of having to convince African Americans to donate their materials to repositories, which were external to the African American community. The challenge often proved greater because some of these facilities had past histories of racist and tension-tinged relations with African American communities. Therefore, archivists went to extra lengths to allay suspicions and make prospective donors feel at ease about entrusting their materials to the custody of White facilities. Most among this group functioned as archivists/mediators between these facilities and African American donors. This group, comprised of mostly females, was very similar to African American female archivists at African American repositories, in that they also relied upon the assistance of advisory board members to gain trust.

White male and female archivists at White repositories faced the greatest challenges of all in gaining donors' trust. They were outsiders to African American communities and this fact required them to expend more time and effort building trust with prospective donors. Similar to African American and other ethnic archivists at White repositories, they relied upon the assistance of members of their advisory boards. They also cultivated personal relationships with community members in order to gain trust and indicated that they used similar strategies to gain the trust of donors in communities of other ethnic identities as well.

6.2.3 Documenting Selected Subject Areas

The solicitation of selected materials constitutes one of the oldest and most well known strategies for documenting history. It is better known, to some degree, as a strategy that has permitted repositories to purposely avoid documenting and preserving the history of African American communities, as evidenced in the writings of Kemp (1978), Ruffin (1992), and Simpson (1996). Institutional mission statements and policies have given archivists the authority to decide if and how they will effect the telling of history. Nearly twenty-eight percent of the repositories represented in this study had formal institutional mission statements providing for the documentation of local African American communities. Most repositories with such missions were of African American identity. Otherwise, the preservation of local African American history basically fit in, to some degree, with other larger documentation initiatives. Thirty-one percent of the repositories represented in the study had formal collecting policies in regard to the documentation of local African American communities. Similar to the number of facilities with official mission statements, official policy provisions existed mainly at African American repositories.

The study found that having a formal mission statement and a formal collecting policy did not always ensure the most successful documentation of local African American communities. In fact, slightly more than seventy-two percent of the repositories overall had no formal mission statements in that regard. Nearly seventy percent had no formal collecting policies. Most of the successful documentation initiatives, where repositories had sixty or more collections, were located at facilities that had neither formal mission statements, nor formal collecting policies. The study suggested that what mattered most was the

administrative support of repositories, the availability and allocation of appropriate resources, and the service and tenure of archivists.

6.3 Similarities and Differences Among Documentation Approaches

The study found that African American and White repositories used the same kinds of strategies to document local African American communities. Archivists at all of the repositories extended outreach to communities, sought to gain the trust of donors, and solicited materials pertaining to particular subject areas corresponding with their institutional mission statements and collecting policies. Among the three groups of strategies, there was some variation in how archivists gained trust. That difference was noted with respect to the racial identity of repositories, rather than the archivists. The greatest difference in how African American and White repositories documented local African American communities had to do with their overall missions and the reasons for which these facilities initially came into existence.

African American repositories were founded for the express purpose of preserving and making accessible the African American historical and cultural record. These entities are a part of the African American community and served as a vehicle through which the community can fulfill its professional obligation to document itself. Meanwhile, White repositories were not established for the specific purpose of documenting African American history. Such materials amounted to but one aspect of their collections. This study found that, from a political perspective, the collecting thrusts differed for the two groups of repositories, based upon the levels of custody they assumed over African American materials.

Archivists at White repositories gave not the slightest indication that they regarded their facilities, now or in the future, as caretakers for the bulk of Black history in the same

way as African American repositories did. That sentiment was observed even among archivists at White repositories that held special African American collections. Nonetheless, African American archivists at these facilities expressed optimism that White repositories could and should play a role in documenting and preserving local African Americana. Several based their viewpoints upon the fact that: (1) some White repositories had ample resources to facilitate such documentation; (2) locally accessible African American communities with important collectible history existed within proximity to White repositories; and (3) the pervasiveness of African American history was such that no particular group of repositories, African American or otherwise, could document it in its entirety.

While some archivists at African American repositories strongly viewed White facilities as competitors, they did not dissuade the efforts of those facilities. They operated with the confidence, however, that African American facilities would continue to take precedence in documenting African American history. Most such facilities included in the study had already engaged in this pursuit far longer than some of the others investigated. African American and other ethnic archivists at African American repositories inferred that their constituent African American communities trusted them in this endeavor. They, in turn, sought to reciprocate through the quality of services rendered to local communities.

6.4 Factors That Influence How Archivists Document Local African American Communities

This study found that a number of factors influenced how African American and non-African American archivists documented African American communities. The issues of race and gaining trust were prominent in that regard and served to determine the success or failure

of documentation initiatives. More importantly, race provided African American archivists with an entrée to the history of the African American community that was not accessible to White archivists. Informant A12 emphasized that archivists must know the community and its history at an intimate level, rather than on the basis of an acquaintance. Such is possible by virtue of the fact that African American archivists have lived and shared in the Black experience and they know its subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, nuances.

Other factors that influenced how successfully archivists documented communities included challenges in the areas of staffing, funding, available storage space, competition among repositories, shortages of existing materials, and the reputations of certain facilities. Limited staffing resources affected eighty-six percent of the archivists and impacted the solicitation, acquisition, and processing of materials. African American and other ethnic archivists at both African American and White repositories mentioned this factor most frequently. Generally, however, archivists at both groups of repositories indicated that the overall shortage of African American archivists in the profession affected efforts to document African American communities.

Nearly forty-five percent of all archivists were affected by funding limitations to some degree. This factor contributed to staffing shortages at repositories and sometimes precluded African American facilities from acquiring materials through purchases. Limitations in funding also influenced institutional decisions regarding the pursuit of additional space to house collections and affected daily operations at some facilities. The efforts of African American archivists were most affected by funding inadequacies.

Competition for African American materials existed between African American repositories and between African American and White repositories. The strongest

competition for African American archivists came when the latter group of repositories purchased such collections. Funding was not widely available for that purpose at most of the twenty-nine facilities, and archivists generally preferred to acquire materials through donations. Comparatively, about thirty-eight percent of African American archivists and thirty-six percent of White archivists purchased small quantities of materials. There was also competition for materials due to the fact that some facilities collected in similar subject areas.

Shortages of materials influenced the way that archivists documented African American communities when materials no longer existed, or donors refused to make them available to facilities. In such instances, the task of identifying and locating such materials proved challenging. Slightly more than seventeen percent of archivists indicated that this factor affected their efforts.

The study found that the reputation of White repositories mattered especially where some of these facilities had past histories of racial tensions that resulted in the alienation of African American communities. Consequently, giving up custody of materials to these institutions had political implications for donors. This factor influenced the efforts of less than seven percent of the archivists.

6.5 Materials Needed to Document Local African American Communities

Bonner (1980) and Cox (2001) identify major topical areas necessary for the comprehensive documentation of a local community or region, regardless of its ethnic characterization. Their listings recommend the documentations of subject areas encompassing every aspect of the making and existence of a community and its affairs over the course of time. Understandably, this includes the contributions of all groups, individuals and institutions that contribute substantially thereto. The twenty-nine repositories represented

in this study collectively held materials corresponding to virtually all of the subject areas mentioned in the writings of Bonner (1980) and Cox (2001). Meanwhile, responses from the informants indicated that few, if any, of the individual repositories strictly adhered to the recommended guidelines and acquired materials in all of the subject areas emphasized by the mentioned scholars. The number of subject areas included among the holdings at some repositories varied widely.

The present study found that in the case of African American communities, such documentation followed two parallel conventions. African American archivists at African American repositories sought after materials documenting the history of African American communities largely as independent constructions within particular states or the nation. African American archivists at White repositories with special collections of African Americana collected in a similar vein. Meanwhile, there was an indication that some White archivists at the latter repositories sought after African Americana that seemed, in part, to complement the documentation of history from the viewpoint of the dominant culture. Several among these informants described special projects or other initiatives that focused upon particular topical areas relevant to local African American communities. There was no evidence that a number of such undertakings resulted in more than limited coverage of particular aspects of these communities' history.

6.6 Most Extensively Documented Aspects of Local African American Community History

The aspects of African American community history most extensively documented by repositories represented in this study correspond closely to those set forth in the writings of Bonner (1980) and Cox (2001). Informants among the twenty-nine facilities identified the

following: the arts, entertainment, sports, law, medicine, education, fraternities and sororities, religion, politics, business, industry, social activism, the Civil Rights Movement, community service organizations, and numerous occupations and professions. In addition to traditional archival resources, oral histories were a major component of existing collections at African American and majority-White repositories. Fifty-eight percent of African American facilities and forty-seven percent of majority-White facilities held such materials. Oral histories constituted most, if not all, of the African American holdings at several majority-White repositories. African American repositories generally collected small quantities of strictly non-African American materials pertaining to interactions with White groups and individuals whose influence shaped some aspect of Black life. Informants indicated that many such materials consisted of items documenting the role of Whites with respect to civil rights era, voting rights, and education, and desegregation matters during the latter half of the past century.

6.7 Considerations of a Model That Would Ensure an Adequate Collection

Documenting local African Americana is the work and interest of African American, White, and other ethnic archivists at African American and White repositories alike. A model that ensures an adequate collection of this material is one embraced wholeheartedly and to the fullest extent possible by all these constituents of the archival profession. Doing so requires resources and strategies sufficient for archivists to carefully mine local communities, become apprised of their history, and identity and preserve collectible traces of the past. More importantly, community members must be included in this reconstruction of vital cultural memory that is often overlooked, under-documented, and begs discovery. This study found that archivists currently follow two paths in this pursuit. The first focused specifically

upon the documentation of local African American communities. With the second approach, documentation of these communities was included among initiatives aimed at other larger geographical regions. The overall collecting ideologies and racial identities of repositories further compounded the work of archivists and helped determine if, and to what degree, facilities focused upon the documentation of African American history. Informants indicated that, overall, African American and White repositories had traditionally subscribed to culturally different collecting missions in that regard and documented two different, though related, versions of history. Archivists at the former emphasized that African American repositories were established primarily for the purpose of documenting and preserving African American history. Although White repositories collected African Americana, this material represented but one aspect of their holdings. Documenting African American history on a large scale at these entities came as a later undertaking, thus, placing many White repositories on an unequal footing with those of African American identity.

The study found that the most consistent reconstructions of African American historical memory pertaining to local communities are likely to be found among repositories that specifically provide for the inclusion of such materials among their holdings. This was evidenced through the responses of archivists at African American facilities, as well as White facilities that developed special collections of African Americana. Otherwise, the portion of African American history collected when and where it fits within the larger missions of White repositories might sometimes constitute an excerpt of the Black experience. Such excerpts preserve valuable materials that might never be collected for perpetuity, but they may not render a complete accounting of people, events, and institutions in the full context of African American history.

There was no evidence of competition specifically between any of the facilities represented in the study. All, however, were susceptible to competition from other repositories engaged in documenting various aspects of African American history. Both African American and White archivists acknowledged that they could not preserve everything. They recognized that many local African American materials were going undetected and uncollected. To circumvent that problem, several informants discussed the idea of possible collaborations whereby repositories would assist community groups in documenting their own history. Archivists recognized such efforts as an educational process intended to provide information and help community groups make decisions regarding materials appropriate for preservation. Several facilities also offered workshops of various sorts and trained community groups to process and care for particular types of materials. Suhler (1970) discusses a model for such collaborations in the book *Local History Collection and Services in a Small Public Library*.[1]

6.8 How Efforts of Repositories Impact Documentation at the Local Level

Collier-Thomas (1990) suggests that repositories have, perhaps, only just begun to tackle the feat to document the African American experience. This scholar advocates for a proliferation in such efforts. The facilities represented in the present study include but a fraction of those that engage in such pursuits and focus upon documenting African American communities at the local level. Less than twenty-eight percent of the twenty-nine repositories abided by formal mission statements for that purpose. This percentage included six African American repositories and two White repositories. Thirty-one percent of the twenty-nine repositories had formal collecting policies in that regard. Five African American repositories and four White repositories were included in this percentage. These facts, along with the

sizes of some African American collections suggested that the African American repositories generally gave higher priority to these materials and were more likely to consciously include them among their holdings. The study also suggested that the absence of formal mission statements and policies sometimes resulted in more fragmented collections of diminutive breadth. Archivists at most of the facilities provided no information pertaining to the actual numbers of local African American collections included among their holdings. Therefore, it was impossible to fully assess the extent to which African American and White repositories had succeeded in documenting local communities. Whatever quantity of materials these facilities have acquired is beneficial, however, for it means some record of African American history and contributions have been preserved for present and future research purposes.

6.9 Summary

This research examined the strategies that African American and White archivists use to document the history of local African American communities. Essentially, both groups relied upon the same kinds of strategies, and the racial identities of archivists and their repositories were critical factors in launching successful documentation initiatives. The existence of institutional mission statements and formal collecting policies indicated a level of commitment on the part of repositories. Most facilities had neither formal missions, nor formal policies in that regard, but African American repositories evidenced the strongest interest in preserving the history of local communities. Meanwhile, archivists at all repositories encountered certain challenges with respect to limitations in staffing, funding, space, competition for materials, and the availability of primary sources. The racial baggage that stemmed from their institutions' past histories also challenged some archivists at White repositories.

ENDNOTES

[1] Sam A. Suhler, *Local History Collection and Services in a Small Public Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1970).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Implications

7.1.1 Introduction

The Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project has implications for archivists, repositories, and African American communities. This study also has implications for researchers in the field of Library Science who seek knowledge concerning the development of local African American collections. It evidences that archivists and their repositories have a professional interest in preserving primary sources from local African American communities. This research identifies current strategies and practices that African American, White, and other ethnic archivists at African American and White repositories have employed for that purpose. Both groups of repositories have acquired a variety of such materials directly and indirectly through various local, state, regional, and national collecting foci. The research also identifies a documentation model that repositories may successfully utilize in conjunction with these foci.

7.1.2 For Archivists

African American and non-African American archivists participating in this study demonstrated their interest in local African American primary sources as components of collections. Horton (2001) and Phillips (1979) support the view that such materials contribute

much to the understanding of American history overall. Sentiments expressed by informants during the course of the study represent a reversal in thinking from decades past when some archival practitioners either devalued African American materials all together, or adhered strongly to selecting only certain representative portions for inclusion in their holdings. This study found that archivists now approach collection development with more of a view towards inclusiveness where local African American history is concerned. The documentation process still seems somewhat selective in many respects, however. Less than twenty-five percent of the archivists indicated that they made conscious efforts to focus upon local African American materials through the channels of institutional mission statements and collecting policies. Most archivists did so far less decisively, resulting in collecting irregularities and random documentation at some facilities, as acknowledged by informants A18 and A26, among others.

This means that most local African American materials are probably not receiving the level of attention they deserve, in order for archivists to develop collections representing the widest possible segment of important groups and individuals that make up communities. Here, it must be understood that archivists carry out their work in accordance with the guidelines of their institutions and often face challenges in doing so. They may advocate for changes in the allocation of staffing and financial resources. Certainly, the hiring of additional archivists of African American identity will benefit documentation initiatives aimed at African American communities. The ability of these archivists to gain trust more expeditiously in African American communities than their White counterparts enhances efforts to hasten the preservation of valuable materials before they are lost or destroyed. Informants at both African American and White repositories called attention to the shortages

of African American archivists, thus, encouraging their entry into the archival profession in greater numbers is a matter of urgency. Meanwhile, the study showed that White archivists are indeed successful in documenting local African American history. This was noted in regards to two archivists in particular who were solely responsible for the acquisition of such materials at their repositories. One of these informants reported spending years building trust and developing a rapport with the local African American community. Doing so essentially meant building relationships one person at a time. Here, the outcome proved successful but time was a tradeoff. An African American archivist might have achieved the same feat in a far shorter time and possibly acquired a larger number of collections in the process.

7.1.3 For Repositories

Among the twenty-nine repositories surveyed, this research identified four major documentation groups. Each was distinguishable in terms of its components: (1) formal collecting missions and formal collecting policies; (2) formal collecting missions and informal collecting policies; (3) informal collecting missions and formal collecting policies; and (4) informal collecting missions and informal collecting policies. The overall administrative decisions guiding the operations of repositories determined the particular documentation group to which these entities belonged. Across the four groups, repositories either focused directly, or indirectly, upon the documentation of local African American communities. Such collecting foci were further distinguished by the racial identities of the repositories. Typically, African American and White facilities had as their overall respective foci the documentation of Afrocentric or Eurocentric accounts of history. In turn, these foci seemed to determine the extent to which repositories sought to acquire African American primary sources at local and other levels.

Having formal collecting missions and policies pertaining to local African Americana seemed desirable for obvious reasons, because these components give certain priority to such materials. A majority of the repositories surveyed, however, belonged to the fourth documentation group and had no formal collecting components in that regard. Meanwhile, well-established documentation programs, some providing for the inclusion of impressive numbers of local materials, existed among repositories dispersed across each of the four groups. Most important for successful local documentation was the availability of staffing and financial resources and the administrative support from various repositories. Relatively few archivists provided information concerning the actual numbers of local collections within their total African American holdings, and that seemed to reflect the priority given to such sources. Therefore, it is difficult to say definitively just how well most repositories in this study have done in documenting such communities. The inquiry recognizes that documenting local African American history is the ever-unfinished business of repositories that strive to preserve it. Developing an adequate collection must necessarily extend beyond one-time special projects of limited duration at facilities.

Due to its magnitude and the continuous flow of human activity, no particular group of repositories can possibly document local African American history in its entirety. Suhler (1970) suggests that this is an undertaking appropriate for African American and White facilities to tackle cooperatively. A small number of informants talked about collaborations between their repositories and local communities. None, however, discussed the possibility of collaborating with other repositories or the potential benefits that may come from doing so. The time has come when facilities should engage in partnerships with each other and with

as many individuals, groups, and institutions in the African American community as possible, in order to preserve local history.

The ideal archives and community partnership model should focus upon the local African American community in the manner described by Kreneck (1985 and 1979) regarding the local Mexican American community in Texas. There, documenting the local community became a community-wide effort. All members of the community were encouraged to donate materials that contributed to the telling of the community's history, regardless of the quantity of items donated by individual members. Documenting the local African American community should prompt a town meeting of sorts where archivists and their repositories talk to communities about the past in much the same way that journalists bring current events into the spotlight.

7.1.4 For African American Communities

In order to ensure the rendering of a complete and authentic narrative of the African American past, the participation and support of local African American communities is imperative as repositories document their history. This assessment mirrors a view long held by the American Historical Association in general. Study informants inferred that members of local African American communities are experts on their lives and accomplishments, often possessing invaluable traces that bear proof of their achievements. The writings of Stewart (1994) and Martin-Felton and Lowe (1993) support this observation. Without their memories, stories, primary sources, and a willingness of local community members to relinquish custody of historical treasures, the informational wealth of our nation's repositories would, no doubt, diminish considerably.

Whereas Biddle (2000) emphasizes that archivists have a responsibility to preserve African American history, local communities have an obligation to assist archivists in that endeavor. Archibald (2004) recommends the formation of partnerships between repositories and communities. Mutual benefits may be derived from such arrangements. Communities can have the satisfaction of knowing that their materials will receive use and professional care in a secure environment beyond that which is possible in private homes or offices. Meanwhile, repositories may carry out their duty to preserve the historical record as well as acquire materials necessary for future scholarly pursuits.

Some of the best allies the archival profession has for preserving local African American history may be communities where donors are satisfied with the outcome of successful documentation initiatives. Repositories and community members should strive to maintain a lasting relationship well after records are boxed up and transported to various facilities. Whenever possible, archival practitioners may wish to elicit the help of former donors to convince the undecided and the unbelievers who may feel it is in their best interest to maintain personal papers and records in homes and offices. Informant A2 reported the successful outcome of just such an approach, whereby committed donors succeeded in encouraging other members of the local Black community to donate materials to a collection in the early stages of development. Community members, in fact, manifested a public expression of ownership for the collection.

7.1.5 For Research in Library Science

This research has implications for African American and non-African American archivists at both African American and historically White repositories. It also has implications for archivists developing locally based collections at different types of

repositories such as those situated at academic institutions, research centers, historical societies, museums, and public libraries. The breadth of collections acquired and the patrons for whom services are provided distinguishes the mentioned categories of repositories. There are differences and similarities among the documentation strategies archivists employ at these different types of facilities. These include differences and similarities in various outreach strategies such as educational outreach, programs and services, publicity, and support from members of advisory boards and the like. The current study utilized a random, though highly selective, sample consisting of a small number of African American and White repositories. Therefore, it was not possible to generalize the findings of this study to the larger population.

Archivists and scholars, including Kreneck (1985 and 1979), (Neal (2002), Glassie (1995), and Bethel (1997a and 1997b), have written about documentation initiatives that focused upon the history of specific ethnic populations in singular communities. However, there is no evidence of a prior study of the magnitude of the current investigation, which examined the documentation of multiple communities comprised of a particular ethnic group. This research informs Library Science and archival literatures about the efforts of African American, White, and other ethnic archivists engaged in documenting African American history. It also provides a brief history of local African American collection development in the United States and identifies a model that archivists may follow to increase the volume of such holdings.

7.2 Future Research

This investigation provided an answer to the main research question and generated other related inquiries for subsequent pursuit. Among these, for example, difficulties in

identifying repositories with local African American collections became immediately apparent during the course of identifying prospective participants for the current study. That fact was noted in numerous instances where repository websites indicated a presence of locally based ethnic materials. Yet, searches of online catalog records at various facilities proved ineffective in specifically identifying these holdings. Such obstacles were oftentimes encountered among White repositories, whereby information pertaining to the ethnic identity of collections and their geographic origins was not apparent. Many worthy facilities were, no doubt, excluded from consideration for that reason. How repositories index local African American materials constitutes an area for exploration, and so does an analysis of the scope and content of many of these collections held by repositories throughout the United States.

Of the overall number repositories identified for the purposes of the current study, only a fraction of the archivists recruited is represented in the actual research. Many archivists either failed to respond or declined the invitation to participate. A larger and more involved survey of repositories with local African American collections may have value for the archival profession as well as the scholarly community. This was evidenced through conversations with participating archivists, many of whom stated they frequently lacked information sufficient to identify local collections at other facilities and make appropriate referrals to their patrons. Replicating this study on a larger scale may also have merit because the sample population was highly selective and did not include some of the most well known repositories in the nation. This was largely due to the fact that a high percentage of archivists failed to respond to the initial invitation to participate or subsequent follow-up messages and telephone calls. Certainly, further investigation of museum archives is warranted, whereas a dearth of such information is noted in the writings of Smith (1995) and other scholars.

The review of professional literature led to the identification of a number of noted African American forebears whose lives and work became synonymous with efforts to document and preserve Black historical materials. Some of these individuals developed significant private collections, which were later acquired by repositories. Others carried out their duties at well-known institutions such as the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian. The documentation strategies used by these and other private collectors are not widely discussed in the archival literature but may offer useful clues for archivists to consider.

Conversations with various informants revealed that a number of African American collections are still held privately by individuals beyond the boundaries of repositories. There is every reason to believe that the identification and examination of these collections make for an area of fruitful discovery as well. Otherwise, there is no way to assess the contents of such collections or ascertain the contribution they can potentially make for future scholarly investigations.

In addition to the future research topics identified in this section, the unused data from the current study will also be utilized for other scholarly writings.

7.3 Summary

The archival profession has made strides preserving the history of local African American communities. There is more that can and must be done in that regard, however. This study indicated that archivists clearly have an interest in this pursuit, but such undertakings oftentimes take on immense proportions. Having formal collecting missions and policies seemingly gave higher priority to local African American primary sources. The study found these documentation components were determinants of documentation success,

however. What mattered most in that regard was the availability of essential resources such as adequate staffing, funding, and space resources, as well as administrative support from repositories. Ultimately, repositories must decide how best to allocate such resources to their needs. There is a critical need for more archivists on the staffs of repositories, particularly archivists of African American identity who have a rapport with communities and can expedite the process of cultivating donors and identifying important materials.

Documenting local African American history must become more of a collaborative venture between African American and non-African American repositories. Among other things, the two groups of entities may pursue the possibility of sharing space resources and grant funding for joint documentation initiatives, workshops, and other types of programs. Doing so can contribute to a more thorough accounting of the local African American past. Meanwhile, local African American communities must not rely upon archivists or archival facilities to bear this burden unaided. Community members hold the enviable position of knowing their history better than anyone else and they hold the proof of their achievements. More importantly, they have an obligation to donate these materials, such that their history may be presented as authentically as possible locally, nationally, and internationally.

Finally, continued research concerning the development of these collections can provide archivists and their repositories with valuable insights for the present and the future. Such investigations can identify new and existing collections and provide clues for strengthening local African American holdings.

APPENDIX A:

PILOT STUDY RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date

Archivist's Name
Repository Name
Address line 1
Address line 2

Dear (Archivist):

I am a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In conjunction with my studies, I am conducting a research project to gather data for my doctoral dissertation. This effort is aimed at understanding how archivists document local/regional African American communities through primary source materials. My study compares and contrasts strategies used by archivists in this regard.

Respectfully, I am inviting you to participate in the pilot study for this investigation. I will accommodate your participation through an individual interview of approximately forty-five minutes in length. You will be invited to talk with me by telephone or in-person at a mutually agreed-upon time and place. With your permission, I will audiotape your responses, which will not be reported in any of my findings. The tape will be used as a backup for handwritten notes recorded during the interview. Data collected during the pilot study will enable me to test and revise my interview protocol prior to launching the main study. At the conclusion of the study I will erase all tapes and destroy all handwritten notes. Only Dr. Helen R. Tibbo, my faculty advisor, other members of my dissertation committee, and I will listen to the tapes and read the interview notes.

Your repository has been selected for inclusion in this pilot study because of your institutional commitment to acquiring, preserving, and providing access to African American cultural resources. What you have to say about how you document African American communities is of extreme importance to me as a researcher, and I hope that you will be interested and enthusiastic about volunteering to participate. Regrettably, I am unable to offer any type of compensation in exchange for your participation. In the future, however, the archival profession will gain much from the information that this study can provide. My findings will, undoubtedly, be of interest to scholars, archivists and curators. At the conclusion of the main study, a summary of the results will be made available to all interested participants.
I will greatly appreciate the opportunity to contact you by telephone within three days from the date of this letter to set a date and time for an interview. Scheduling an interview and granting me permission to record your responses will indicate your willingness to participate

in this study, and I sincerely hope that you will agree to do so. Please be assured that participation in the study is strictly voluntary. You are totally free to decline participation, cancel an interview appointment, leave an interview setting, or withdraw from the pilot study at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate, your decision will not affect you in any way as a member of the archival profession.

If you have questions about your participation, or the study and its findings, please feel free to contact me via email or telephone as soon as possible. My email address is lchurch@email.unc.edu, and my home telephone number is (919) xxx-xxxx.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

L. Teresa Church,
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B:

PILOT STUDY CONSENT FORM

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Information about a Research Study

IRB Study # 06-0462 **Consent Form Version Date:** 09-18-06

Title of Study: Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project

Principal Investigator: Lila Teresa Church, Doctoral Candidate
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Information and Library Science
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Helen R. Tibbo

Study Contact telephone number: 919-xxx-xxxx (for Lila Teresa Church)
919-xxx-xxxx (for Dr. Helen R. Tibbo)
Study Contact email: lchurch@email.unc.edu (for Lila Teresa Church)
tibbo@ils.unc.edu (for Dr. Helen R. Tibbo)

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

I want to understand how archivists at African American and mainstream White repositories document the history of local/regional African American communities through archival materials. I also want to explore similarities and differences among the strategies archivists at a variety of repositories utilize in that regard. The goal of the investigation is to identify strategies that have enabled archivists to achieve the most adequate and comprehensive documentation of a community's local history. This study is being conducted to gather data

for my doctoral dissertation.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of four people in the pilot study.

How long will your part in this study last?
The pilot study interview will take 45 to 50 minutes for completion. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

What will happen if you take part in the study
I will ask you questions about the work you do in collecting archival materials pertaining to local/regional African American communities. I will audiotape your responses and take notes about what you say. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer, for any reason. You may indicate your willingness to participate in this study by agreeing to schedule a date and time for an interview. You also have the right to refuse permission for your interview responses to be recorded.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your participation is important to help me and members of the archival profession understand how archivists go about documenting the history of local/regional African American communities, but you may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
I do not think you will experience any discomfort or risk from the interview.

How will your privacy be protected?
I will only write your initials, not your name, on the notes from the interview. Neither your name and your initials, nor the responses you provide during the pilot interview will be used in the presentation of my research to others, so no one in your community, or elsewhere, will know what you said.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
I am not going to pay you for your information, but your information is very important to me.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There are no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me at (919) xxx-xxxx while I am conducting this investigation. You can contact me or my advisor in the United States at the phone numbers and email addresses listed at the beginning of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your

rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Thank you for helping me with this study.

APPENDIX C:

MAIN STUDY RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date

Archivist's Name
Repository Name
Address line 1
Address line 2

Dear (Archivist):

I am a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In conjunction with my studies, I am conducting a research project to gather data for my doctoral dissertation. This effort is aimed at understanding how archivists document local/regional African American communities through primary source materials. My study compares and contrasts strategies used by archivists in this regard.

Respectfully, I am inviting you to serve as a participant in this investigation. I will accommodate your participation through an individual interview of approximately forty-five minutes in length. In addition, I may need to contact you for a follow-up call of about fifteen minutes, if the need arises to clarify any of your responses as I am analyzing my data. You will be invited to talk with me by telephone or in-person at a mutually agreed-upon time and place. With your permission, I will audiotape your responses, which will be reported anonymously. The tape will be used as a backup for handwritten notes recorded during the interviews. At the conclusion of the study I will erase all tapes and destroy all handwritten notes. Only Dr. Helen R. Tibbo, my faculty advisor, other members of my dissertation committee, and I will listen to the tapes and read the interview notes.

Your repository has been selected for inclusion in this investigation because of your institutional commitment to acquiring, preserving, and providing access to African American cultural resources. What you have to say about how you document African American communities is of extreme importance to me as a researcher, and I hope that you will be interested and enthusiastic about volunteering to participate. Regrettably, I am unable to offer any type of compensation in exchange for your participation. In the future, however, the archival profession will gain much from the information that this study can provide. My findings will, undoubtedly, be of interest to scholars, archivists and curators. At the conclusion of the study, a summary of the results will be made available to all interested participants.
I will greatly appreciate the opportunity to contact you by telephone within ten days from the date of this letter to set a date and time for an interview. Scheduling an interview and granting me permission to record your responses will indicate your willingness to participate

in this study, and I sincerely hope that you will agree to do so. Please be assured that participation in the study is strictly voluntary. You are totally free to decline participation, cancel an interview appointment, leave an interview setting, or withdraw from the study at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate, your decision will not affect you in any way as a member of the archival profession.

If you have questions about your participation, or the study and its findings, please feel free to contact me via email or telephone as soon as possible. My email address is lchurch@email.unc.edu, and my home telephone number is (919) xxx-xxxx.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

L. Teresa Church,
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX D:

MAIN STUDY CONSENT FORM

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Information about a Research Study

IRB Study # 06-0462 **Consent Form Version Date:** 09-18-06

Title of Study: Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project

Principal Investigator: Lila Teresa Church, Doctoral Candidate
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Information and Library Science
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Helen R. Tibbo

Study Contact telephone number: 919-xxx-xxxx (for Lila Teresa Church)
919-xxx-xxxx (for Dr. Helen R. Tibbo)
Study Contact email: lchurch@email.unc.edu (for Lila Teresa Church)
tibbo@ils.unc.edu (for Dr. Helen R. Tibbo)

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
I want to understand how archivists at African American and mainstream White repositories document the history of local/regional African American communities through archival materials. I also want to explore similarities and differences among the strategies archivists at a variety of repositories utilize in that regard. The goal of the investigation is to identify strategies that have enabled archivists to achieve the most adequate and comprehensive documentation of a community's local history. This study is being conducted to gather data for my doctoral dissertation.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 25 to 50 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
The interview will take 45 to 50 minutes. There may be a follow-up call of approximately 15 minutes duration, if the need arises to clarify any of your interview responses once I begin to analyze my data. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

What will happen if you take part in the study
I will ask you questions about the work you do in collecting archival materials pertaining to local/regional African American communities. I will audiotape your responses and take notes about what you say. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer, for any reason. You may indicate your willingness to participate in this study by agreeing to schedule a date and time for an interview. You also have the right to refuse permission for your interview responses to be recorded.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your participation is important to help me and members of the archival profession understand how archivists go about documenting the history of local/regional African American communities, but you may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
I do not think you will experience any discomfort or risk from the interview.

How will your privacy be protected?
I will only write your initials, not your name, on the notes from the interview. Your name and your initials will not be used in the presentation of this research to others, so no one in your community, or elsewhere, will know what you said.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
I am not going to pay you for your information, but your information is very important to me.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There are no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me at (919) xxx-xxxx while I am conducting this investigation. You can contact me or my advisor in the United States at the phone numbers and email addresses listed at the beginning of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject

you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Thank you for helping me with this study.

APPENDIX E:

TELEPHONE SCRIPT FOR SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS

AND RECEIVING IMPLIED CONSENT

Hello, (prospective participant). My name is Teresa Church. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Information and Library Science at the University if North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This call is a follow-up to the letter I emailed you on (date of initial letter).

As you know, I am investigating how archivists document local/regional African American communities. Do you have any questions or concerns about the project described in my letter?

I would very much appreciate an opportunity to learn about the work you do at (name of repository) to help build local African American collections. May I schedule a date and time to interview you?

(If participant declines invitation, thank him/her for his/her time and end conversation.)

(If prospective participant accepts invitation):
The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Is there a date and time that best fits your schedule within the next five to seven days?

(If participant resides locally/regionally)
Do you prefer a telephone interview, or a face-to-face interview?

(For phone interviews):
May I call you at this number, or is there another number that may be more convenient for you?

(For face-to-face interviews):
Where would you like me to meet you for the interview?

(Phone interviews for participants located beyond the local/regional area):
Since you live beyond my geographic location, I will be happy to speak with you by phone. May I call you at this number, or is there another number that may be more convenient for you?

When we talk on (interview date), will you grant me permission to audiotape your responses?

In preparation for our discussion on (interview date), may I request some general information about you and your repository?

A. Biographical Data:

1. What is your title?
2. How long have you worked in the archival profession, and at this repository?
3. What responsibilities do you have for collecting materials?

B. Repository Data.

4. When was your repository established? (Date)
5. What is your repository's mission in regard to collections and collecting?
6. What is the size of your collection?

Thank you very much for agreeing to talk with me. I look forward to our discussion on (scheduled date at scheduled time

APPENDIX F:

TELEPHONE REMINDER SCRIPT FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

(The day before the interview):
Hello, (prospective participant), I am Teresa Church and I am touching base regarding my interview with you. Does the (scheduled date and time) still work for you?

(If participant says "yes");
Thank you very much, and I look forward to seeing you at (interview location) on (scheduled date and time).

(If participant needs to reschedule an interview):
Is there another date and time that better suits your schedule?
Do you prefer a telephone interview, or a face-to-face interview?

(For phone interviews):
May I call you at this number, or is there another number that may be more convenient for you?

(For face-to-face interviews):
Where would you like me to meet you for the interview?

(If participant changes his/her mind and says "no," thank him/her for his/her time and end conversation.)

APPENDIX G:

SCRIPT TO START INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANTS

Thank you very much for allowing me to interview you about the work you do to help build local African American archival collections.

Explain to respondent:
The goals of this study are twofold: (1) to investigate strategies used by archivists at African American and mainstream repositories to document local African American communities and (2) to discover how archivists at African American and mainstream repositories can more effectively document these communities. The data you provide is confidential, and your participation is strictly voluntary. You have the right to terminate your involvement at any time. Thank you for your time, effort, and your disciplinary perspective that is critical to this study.

May I record your responses?

Proceed with questions in section "**C. Collections and Documentation**" and section "**D. Closing**" of the Interview Protocol.

APPENDIX H:

INSTRUMENTATION

Date:		
Name:		
Gender:	☐ **Male**	☐ **Female**
Racial Identity:		
Repository Name:		
Repository Address:		
Email Address:		
Telephone Number:		
Repository Website:		

Ethnic Communities Archival Documentation Project

Archivists' Interview Protocol

Participants will provide responses to these questions during face-to-face interviews and via telephone.

Explain to respondent: The goals of this study are twofold: (1) to investigate strategies used by archivists at African American and mainstream repositories to document local African American communities and (2) to discover how archivists at African American and mainstream repositories can more effectively document these communities. The data you provide is confidential, and your participation is strictly voluntary. You have the right to terminate your involvement at any time. Thank you for your time, effort, and your disciplinary perspective that is critical to this study.

A. Biographical Data:

7. What is your title?
8. How long have you worked in the archival profession, and at this repository?
9. What responsibilities do you have for collecting materials?

B. Repository Data.

10. When was your repository established? (Date)
11. What is your repository's mission in regard to collections and collecting?
12. What is the size of your collection?

C. Collections and Documentation.

13. What can you tell me about the coverage of local African American communities in your collection?
14. What are the provisions of your collection development policy regarding the documentation of these communities?
15. When did documentation of these communities begin at your repository, and what influenced the decision to document this group?
16. How do you go about gaining trust in African American communities?
17. What can you tell me about the involvement of African American communities (on your board of trustees or advisory board) in developing your collection?
18. Who are the African American individuals, groups, and institutions (i.e., artists, politicians, particular leaders, sororities, churches, etc.) represented in your collections and what aspects of their history have you documented?

19. What is your strategy for building an ethnically sensitive collection?

20. In your opinion, what are the critical issues (social, political, personal, professional, geographic, financial, etc.) that affect documenting African American communities?

21. Think about the best African American documentation project you completed and tell me what was most/least effective in your approach to cultivating African American donors? Why?

22. Do these outreach efforts differ from those extended to non-African American communities? If so, how?

23. How many African American collections are included among your holdings?

D. Closing.

24. Can you think of steps you could take that you are not already utilizing to identify and procure greater numbers of African American archival collections? If so, why are you not utilizing these steps?

25. What advice can you offer that might prove useful for other archivists attempting to document African American communities?

26. May I contact you again, if the need arises to clarify any of your responses, as I analyze the data you have provided?

APPENDIX I:

THANK-YOU MESSAGE SENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear (Archivist),

The data-collection phase of my dissertation research project is going well. Members of the archival profession are sharing many valuable insights with me. I am extremely grateful for that, and I want to thank you again for your time and for allowing me to have a conversation with you. Upon completing my study, I will look forward to informing you about my conclusions regarding the documentation of local African American communities.

With kindest regards,

L. Teresa Church

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